THEODORE THE STUDITE

ANCIENT CHRISTIAN WRITERS

Writings on Iconoclasm

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INTRODUCTION

"The icon masters of old were never concerned with earthly matters...but always raised their spirit and their thoughts toward the light which is divine and immaterial."

Joseph of Volokolamsk,
Message to an Iconographer[1]

In Defense of Orthodoxy: Theodore the Studite and the Second Iconoclastic Crisis

Theodore the Studite (759–826) is one of the most important personalities in the period of Eastern Christian theology that followed the Second Council of Nicaea (787). The purpose of this volume is to offer to an English-speaking public all the writings of Theodore that were devoted to the question of the veneration of sacred images. Iconoclasm was Theodore's chief preoccupation during the second part of his life; it led to the composition of his chief polemical works—the three *Antirrhetici* and the *Seven Chapters against the Iconoclasts*—as well as his refutations, in verse, of different poetic compositions by members of the iconoclastic party.

Theodore the Studite lived and worked at the very end of the Patristic era and brought together in his vision different elements from the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian fathers and the great Neo-Chalcedonian synthesis of Maximos the Confessor as well as from the great monastic tradition. While the scholarly literature on the iconoclastic crisis is immense, and interest in the theological, aesthetic, and spiritual significance of Eastern Christian iconography shows no sign of abating, comparatively little has been published on the second wave of iconoclasm that struck the Byzantine Empire after

with Emperor Michael I Rhangabe. Michael chose to reject the requests of the Bulgars, fearing that a policy of appeasement might actually give them the time to regroup and strike again with renewed strength. The result of this impasse, however, was a resumption of the hostilities in which the imperial army suffered a series of humiliating defeats and could not stop the advance of the Bulgarian army well into Byzantine territory. The emperor returned to the capital in July, having lost the support not only of the more high-ranking officers in the army, but also of the palace administration and of the church hierarchy. Immediately afterward, an Armenian-born *strategos* from the Anatolian region (or *theme*) staged a palace coup and ascended to the throne with the name of Leo V, forcing Emperor Michael and his immediate family to receive the tonsure and to embrace the monastic life. Later historians would go as far as to allege that the new sovereign had actually engineered the victory of the Bulgars so as to dethrone Michael I, who had already come to be seen as a weak ruler by many of his collaborators.[12]

One of the first signals that the new monarch intended to embrace a new political course was his immediate decision to affirm in a symbolic but highly significant manner the independence of state authorities from ecclesiastical oversight. As he ascended the throne, Leo performed the customary ceremonies, but at the moment of his coronation, he refused to swear the traditional public oath to defend the church from heresy and schism. This event, however, was only a small prelude to the more momentous decisions that the emperor would take the following year. In July 814, Leo contacted John the Grammarian, abbot of the Monastery of Sts. Sergios and Bacchos in Constantinople, and asked him to form a commission that would investigate whether the recent military defeats in the Balkans might not be connected with the practice of icon veneration.[13] The fact itself that the emperor could establish such a committee indicates how, a quarter of a century after the Second Council of Nicaea, there were still considerable portions of the church that would not fully accept the legitimacy of image worship. The historical sources of the time do not disclose whether the emperor had always held on to this position, or whether he sensed that it would be politically expedient to take this stance so as to strengthen his position under the threat of foreign invasion and in a tense political climate. What we know is that the report of the commission substantially sided with the iconoclastic

position. The emperor did not take any immediate action, thereby allowing the iconoclastic party to become more vocal and to start demanding the removal of images from public places of worship. Around Christmas of the year 814, however, Leo ordered the removal of an icon of Christ from the façade of the imperial palace, allegedly to save it from being defaced by the mob.[14] The situation grew increasingly tense: other churches started to take down many portable icons that had been the object of particular devotion, and the Patriarch Nikephoros, who had voiced his opposition to this trend, was forced to resign and leave the capital.

At this point Theodore chose to intervene, organizing a procession around the Studios monastery with icons of Christ, the Mother of God, and the saints who were protectors of his community. The procession appears to have taken place in March 815, and Theodore's hope was to rally the church of Constantinople against what he saw as a sly attempt to subvert the conciliar decisions of 787. In fact, the newly appointed patriarch seized the opportunity to convene a synod that declared the Second Council of Nicaea null and void, and reaffirmed the validity of the iconoclastic Council of Hieria as the Seventh Ecumenical Council.[15] The result of this decision was the beginning of a period of persecution for all those who persisted in upholding the legitimacy of religious images. Theodore was arrested and had to undergo repeated flogging, but he refused to recant and was exiled from the capital. When Emperor Michael II ascended the throne in 821 and the first wave of persecution relented, Theodore was released from imprisonment, but at the time of his death in 826, he had still not been allowed to return to his monastery in Constantinople.[16] It was only at the Synod of Constantinople, which was held in 842, sixteen years after Theodore's passing, that the legitimacy of icon veneration was reestablished for all time, and the theological vision of the abbot of the Studios was finally vindicated.

In his study of Theodore's life and thought, Ukrainian scholar Roman Cholij acknowledges the wide-ranging impact of Theodore's writings on iconoclasm, and while he asserts that his works on this theme "do not evidence any original creative thinking," he is at least willing to concede that Theodore was "a highly intelligent practical theologian."[17] Many of the arguments present in the *Antirrhetici*, Theodore's chief work on the topic of the images, had already been deployed by John Damascene in his orations against iconoclasm.

despite the rather surprising fact that in none of his extant writings does Theodore ever seem to quote directly from them. Like John, Theodore takes it for granted that his readers will be familiar with the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians as well as with the Chalcedonian Christology of the fifth century and its later Neo-Cyrillian interpretations. Theodore is also familiar with the christo-centric theology of the spiritual life that had emerged in the centuries after Chalcedon and had found a comprehensive expression in the writings of Maximos the Confessor. In a style that echoes John Damascene's *De Fide Orthodoxa*, the text of the *Antirrhetici* and his other work rely on the canonical authority of earlier authors, whose views are often presented without particular attention being paid to the historical context that occasioned their formulation and without consideration for their chronological location.[18] While John Damascene's way of arranging material in a streamlined, logical fashion already prefigured the style of the later *Summae*, Theodore's more "lateral" way of theologizing recalls the more traditional Cappadocian models, such as the orations of Gregory of Nazianzos or the treatises of Basil of Caesarea.[19] Basil is actually quoted very frequently in the *Antirrhetici* and in Theodore's remaining iconophile works, even if some citations are difficult to identify with any certainty. The other prose works by Theodore follow the same stylistic pattern of the *Antirrhetici*, albeit on a smaller scale. His works in verse, on the contrary, are more explicit exercises in apologetic, responding to the poetic production of iconoclastic authors of the time; their style is less measured, more charged, and they often move into the realm of the invective.

The phenomenon of Byzantine iconoclasm in its theological as well as its historical and cultural aspects has been the object of a vast body of literature, while the growing number of academic and popular publications on the subject of the icons attests to the enduring appeal of Eastern Christian iconography. Rather than attempting a chronological reconstruction of the phenomenon of iconoclasm, this introduction offers a conceptual genealogy of Theodore's theological understanding of the veneration of images; it explores the intrinsic link between Christology and the theology of the icon, but it also seeks to outline and elucidate some of the iconoclastic positions that Theodore himself set out to refute. To this purpose, I focus on the theological vision of three authors: Evagrios Pontikos (345–99), Leontios of Byzantium (485–543), and Maximos the Confessor

(580–662). Evagrios's highly idiosyncratic Christology and his rejection of mental images as hindering the achievement of union with the Divine introduce us to the enduring current of Neo-Platonism that continued to flourish in certain monastic milieus long after the condemnation of Origenism in 553,[20] and which, perhaps unsurprisingly, resurfaced in eighth- and ninth-century iconoclasm. Leontios's reflections on the nature of Christ's subjectivity—which actually integrated Evagrian elements into the orthodox christological paradigm—paved the way for the "asymmetric" reading of Chalcedon that Theodore deploys in the *Antirrhetici* to defend the concreteness of Christ's humanity as well as the possibility of portraying it in an image. Finally, Maximos's theology of the spiritual life and his presentation of the life of Christ as the paradigm of individual asceticism provided the basis for the christological vision that undergirds Theodore's understanding of spiritual life and that emphasizes the ultimacy and the irreducible quality of every individual subject.

Considered in the light of these protracted debates on the hypostatic union and its salvific impact on humanity, the iconoclast crisis can be seen as the final episode in a long-drawn battle between an "Origenist" or "Neo-Origenist" approach to the incarnation and spiritual practice that calls for a spiritualizing flight from the material, and a Chalcedonian narrative that affirms instead the salvific import of the created order and gestures toward its eschatological endurance. We will not find any explicit reference to Origenism in the pages of Theodore's iconophile works, but it is in his passionate defense of the images that the century-long fight around the meaning and the import of the incarnation finally comes to an end. Theodore's theological vision is a passionate defense of the Chalcedonian worldview, one in which Christ's assumption of humanity brings about an irreversible change in the structure of the universe and in which icons allow us a glimpse into the final deification of the cosmos.

The Spirituality of "Origenism" and the Danger of Images

In his outline of the development of Greek Christology, John Meyendorff notes that, during the second and third centuries, the question of images was a cause of great embarrassment to both

Christian and educated "pagan" apologists.[21] On the one hand, Christian authors who preached the mystery of the death and resurrection of the incarnate Word were utterly adamant in their opposition to the veneration of images. On the other hand, Neo-Platonic writers, whose philosophical worldview asserted the intrinsic inferiority of matter, found themselves obliged to defend the legitimacy of the images of the Olympian gods. The strategy used by non-Christian apologists was to resort to the Platonic dialectic of prototype and image: the prototypes belonged to the immaterial realm and existed on an ontologically higher plane than the idols of stone and metal, but material images were necessary as long as human beings remained in the fallen world of the flesh, since they had no other access to the divine prototypes.[22]

In an extant fragment of *Contra Christianos*, Porphyry acknowledges that, for some simple people, the gods truly dwelt in the idols of stone and gold. While this distortion is merely the result of their poor education, Porphyry claims that uneducated pagans are actually less incoherent than Christians. The latter may reject images, but they believe that the Godhead entered the womb of a virgin—something far more unsuitable—and chose to "become a fetus, be born and be swaddled in cloths drenched in blood, membranes, bile, and even more vile substances."[23] In his *Sermo Verus*, the Latin author Celsus follows a similar line of argument when he says that the human flesh of Jesus was made of mud, which is of lower dignity than metals or precious stones; therefore, the Christian belief in the incarnation was even more unworthy of the Divine than the pagan practice of idol veneration. "Do the Christians have the right to criticize idols," Celsus asks rhetorically, "when they themselves venerate a God who became flesh?"[24]

Christian writers such as Clement of Alexandria[25] and his followers were well acquainted with these arguments, and of course they understood that educated pagans did not identify images with their divine prototype. Origen actually uses the classical distinction between prototype and image in the text of *De Principiis*, in which he compares the relationship between the Father and the Son (who is the image of the Father) and the relationship between the Son and humanity, which is said to be the image of the image.[26] The very fact that this kind of reasoning could be used in Christian theology—after all, it appeared to provide the philosophical backbone of the most Platonic of New Testament texts, the Letter to the Hebrews—

indicates that the popularity of Neo-Platonic reasoning was not limited to pagan apologetics.

One early author who addresses the question of images in some detail, albeit from a different perspective than we might initially expect, is Evagrios, who explores the role of mental images in the context of spiritual and monastic practice.[27] As noted by Elisabeth Clark in her monograph on fourth-century Origenism, Evagrios played an important role in the rediscovery and popularization of Origen's ideas within the monastic culture of the Egyptian desert.[28] Evagrios had spent the earlier part of his life in Constantinople, but a series of events had led him to abandon the capital and to seek refuge in Jerusalem until he chose to move to Egypt and embrace the monastic life. His theological vision contained a few distant echoes of the thought of the Cappadocians, but it was primarily a synthesis of Neo-Platonic philosophy and Origenist spirituality, transplanted into the barren landscape of Egyptian monasticism. Evagrios's theology of the spiritual life proved to be enormously influential, and it was a theology that anyone with an interest in iconoclasm should consider with the utmost seriousness, since, according to Evagrios, mental images were a major hindrance to Christian spiritual practice.

Evagrios's theological and spiritual vision is grounded in a constant dialectic between unity and multiplicity, university and particularity, the absolute and the contingent. In the writings included in the first volume of the *Philokalia*, he envisages the spiritual battle as an ongoing struggle against inner distraction and fragmentation in which the individual moves gradually away from the created order and ascends toward an undifferentiated intuition of the Divine. According to the *Texts on Discrimination in Respect of Passions and Thoughts*,[29] the first step in the spiritual battle is to learn how to "recognize the difference between angelic thoughts, human thoughts, and thoughts that come from demons." While "angelic thoughts" are concerned with "the true nature of things" and with searching out their "inner essences" so as to learn how to use the created order for the greater glory of God, "demonic thoughts" look forward to "the wealth and glory" that the individual can gain through a selfish use of the same material goods.[30] The chief way in which our thoughts influence our behavior is by way of mental images. Evagrios tells us that "all thoughts inspired by the demons produce within us conceptions of sensory objects," so that the intellect "bears the forms of these objects

within itself." Evagrios will concede that not all mental images originate from the activity of the demons; indeed, he states that it is the very nature of the intellect to "bring forth the images of past events." Whenever thoughts produce anger or desire "in a way that is contrary to nature," however, this is the work of the demons."

Evagrios's theology of the image was influenced by the Aristotelian notion that all knowledge begins in the senses. Where he differed from Aristotle, of course, was in his view that all cognitive processes culminating in mental images are also a supernatural battlefield on which good and evil spirits try to sustain or impede our progress toward God. The individual who heeds the suggestions of the demons is thus filled with impassioned images that tie him to this world and prevent his spiritual ascent. As illustrated by medieval paintings of the temptations of St. Anthony, the monastic is the object of the special attention of the demons, who are eager to disturb his prayer and ensure that his intellect "commits adultery" with the created order.[10] "Impassioned thoughts" (*pathētikoi logismoi*) caused by demons leave an imprint in the intellect that produces anger (*thymos*) and desire (*epithymia*). If the individual heeds these disordered passions, the related mental images become ever more vivid, making it more and more difficult to resist the temptations associated with them. This is a vicious circle that can only be broken by a sustained practice of the virtues of detachment: *epithymia* is destroyed "through fasting, vigils, and sleeping on the ground," and *thymos* is tamed "through long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, and acts of compassion." The individual has to achieve radical detachment from material possessions and self-esteem, and even come to despise his or her body, since "it is through the body that the demons often attempt to attack us."[11]

Evagrios likens the ascetic engaged in this process of struggling against images to the sailors who are in danger at sea and who throw overboard everything they can, because of the violence of the winds and the threatening waves. If we follow these injunctions, God, "the Physician (*therapeutēs*) of souls," will create "the new Adam" in every one of us—an Adam characterized by dispassion (*apatheia*), where there will no longer be any distinction, "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free,"[12] indeed, where images and impassioned thoughts are swept away by detachment, "Christ is all and in all."[13]

What is interesting in Evagrios's analysis is the close correlation between emotional and behavioral tendencies, on the one hand, and the presence of images in the intellect, on the other. According to the treatise *On the Spiritual Law* by Mark the Ascetic, a monastic author of the fourth century who was clearly influenced by Evagrios, a habitual pattern of sinful activity results in the "involuntary presence of former sins in the memory," which he terms "prepossession" (*prolēpsis*)." "Prepossession" conditions our behavior so that, even if we have freed ourselves from voluntary sins of the mind, we still need to fight against the passions that flow from the visual memory of earlier sinful actions. According to Mark the Ascetic, if we experience a temptation, but the temptation does not give rise to a new intellectual image and it fails to bring back images from the past, the "experienced" ascetic is able to repulse the temptation quite easily. Such imageless stimuli, or "provocations" (*prosbolai*), are not accompanied by any guilt, as they attack individuals from outside, in complete independence from their will. If one begins to "entertain" the provocation, however, turning it over in one's mind and considering with some pleasure the possibility of heeding the temptation, the provocation will eventually give rise to a mental image. Once the image has arisen, the individual is no longer free of responsibility; in the words of the Gospel, "anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."[14]

For Evagrios, the condition of inner *apatheia*, which is the goal of the practice of the virtues, must thus be accompanied by the shedding of intellectual images. As he points out in his teachings *On Prayer*, "One who has attained dispassion has not necessarily achieved pure prayer (*katharа proseuchē*)," because his mind may still be occupied with thoughts, "which, though dispassionate, distract him and keep him away from God."[15] Neutral—human—thoughts are also to be shed, as they tie us to the world of plurality, which we need to leave entirely behind. Of course, this approach will have an important impact on the way Evagrios understands the role of the imagination in the spiritual life. "When you are praying," warns Evagrios, "do not shape within yourself any image of the Deity, and do not let yourself be stamped with the impress of any form." What is immaterial can only be approached in an immaterial manner; anything else will merely be a trick of the demons. The natural tendency of the intellect to dally with thoughts ensures that we are easily distracted: the intellect will be

unable to pursue "immaterial and formless knowledge," and shall "mistake smoke for light."[39] The most startling expression of Evagrios's "inner iconoclasm" is found in the *153 Texts on Prayer*, which warns us: "while you are praying purely and calmly (*apathetikōs*)," the demons will "bring before you some strange and alien form, making you imagine in your conceit that the Deity is there." This is because the demons want you to believe that "the object suddenly disclosed to you is the Deity," when in fact "the Deity does not possess quantity or form."[40]

Evagrios's radical rejection of images may also have been influenced by the particular religious landscape of fourth-century Egypt, where traditional Egyptian polytheism was still practiced by a substantial proportion of the population of the rural areas and the deserts in which Evagrios and his followers had settled.[41] The fear that monks who had only recently embraced Christianity could revert to their ancestral practices may have intensified Evagrios's distrust of the imagination. However, if we turn to another work by Evagrios, the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, we will see how his reflection on the role of images goes far deeper than a mere response to social and historical circumstances.

The two extant versions of the *Kephalaia Gnostika* are Syriac translations of a lost Greek original, and while it may be corrupt or incomplete, the text they preserve offers a fascinating entrée into Evagrios's reflections on cosmology and Christology, a theme virtually absent from the writings included in the *Philokalia*. Evagrios envisaged the first creation as a world of eternal and incorrupt intellects (Syr. *hawna*, most likely a translation of the Greek *nous*), who enjoyed a full and unqualified knowledge of the Godhead. The latter is eternal and immutable, whereas the former are distinct from God's being; because of their ignorance or carelessness (Syr. *mahmianuta*, Greek *ameleia*), they are no longer in union with God, but turned their attention to the material world that God had created after their fall.[42] In this vision, the created order is both a punishment and a medicine: the *noes* become entangled by the passions because of their attachment to the world of matter, but they can also contemplate God's activity in creation. In a twist that sets the *Kephalaia Gnostika* apart from the writings of the *Philokalia*, the way their return to unity is accomplished is through the mediatory work of the Logos.[43]

According to Evagrios, ontological plurality is the outward manifestation of an underlying ethical deficiency that is destined to be

superseded at the end of time when the unity of the *noes* with the Godhead will be restored. The role of Christ in this *extra-salvific* dynamic is instrumental to the restoration of this intellectual communion with God even after its descent into the flesh, preserving a simultaneous link with both dimensions.[44] As such, this *nous* is deemed worthy to enter into a union with eternal Logos, so that the person of Christ emerges out of the encounter between these two distinct ontological realities. For the author of the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, the goal of the incarnation is not the redemption of humanity within the framework of the natural order, but the dissolution of this world of multiplicity and the retrieval of the *noes*' communion with the Divine.[45] Ordinarily, *noes* that dwell in the world of the flesh are unable to discern the providential character of the natural world because of their attachments to material reality, but Christ's descent into the flesh reveals God's plan for the world, helping the *noes* leave behind the realm of disordered plurality and become coheirs of the *nous* of Jesus.

This worldview is dramatically very different from the classical model of creation of atonement that we find, for instance, in Athanasios's writings on the incarnation. According to Evagrios, the body or, indeed, the humanity of Christ is a mere tool that is abandoned once its task has been fulfilled.[46] Conversely, attachment to the body is a clear sign that one is unable to transcend the world of plurality or to return to communion with the Divine. If the *153 Texts on Prayer* and the treatise *On Discrimination* are read against the background of the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, Evagrios's rejection of mental images acquires a different significance: relying on your imagination while praying will tie you to the world of multiplicity and plurality, which Christ himself is encouraging you to leave behind.

For Evagrios, Jesus' *nous* was a sort of ontological glue that brought together the eternal Word with the flesh of humanity, while Christ's subjectivity came into being as the encounter of two distinct ontological realities, one of which was eventually destined to be left behind and was thus unworthy of being the subject of meditation or devotion.[47] Eventually, however, the councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon would hone the foundations of what would become the orthodox christological consensus, while "paganism" in its various forms and guises gradually ceased to pose a threat to the Christian churches. The emphatic definition of the consubstantiality between Father and

Son at Nicaea and the later assertion of Christ's full humanity at Chalcedon could not coexist with the subordinationist Christology of Evagrios, nor could they be reconciled with the Origenist call to flee the world of contingency and multiplicity.[48] When the Iconoclast Council of Hieria met in 754 to condemn the veneration of images, the language of its pronouncements was reminiscent of Evagrios's understanding of the incarnation.[49] At the same time, Evagrios's notion of Christ's composite subjectivity would also have a long and unexpectedly orthodox progeny, some of which would be used in defense of the veneration of images.

By the late fifth century, however, the incarnational turn of Chalcedon had led to an irreversible shift in the theology of the hypostatic union, resulting in a greater emphasis on the historical, concrete character of the incarnation. In the old dispensation it was possible to say with Evagrios that "the Deity has no shape or form," but in the words of the Chalcedonian definition, Christians now confess

> *one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood;*
>
> *truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body;*
>
> *consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood;*
>
> *in all things like unto us, without sin;*
>
> *begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood.*[50]

Christ's Composite Subjectivity and the Ontological Status of His Humanity

The Chalcedonian definition, of course, did not represent the conclusion in the development of christological doctrine; indeed, the debate on the meaning and implications of Chalcedonian Christology continued to dominate the theological landscape for centuries to come. In an article on the philosophical nature of the conciliar *horos*, Sarah Coakley points out that the council fathers did not seek to offer an exhaustive account of the hypostatic union, but merely selected

some conceptual and terminological tools to mark a legitimate theological "space" in which reflection on the mystery could continue.[51] In this perspective, the claim that the person of Christ rests in two distinct natures (or *physeis*) should not be seen as a univocal description of an ontological reality, or as a linguistic strategy to articulate a specific religious experience; and it is equally mistaken to regard it as a metaphor or as an invitation to leave behind all preoccupation with conceptual or terminological coherence. For the council fathers, the incarnation was a historical event, and the conciliar definition was analogically grounded in this event, which was something that transcended and challenged our cognitive categories but that could not cease to be the subject of our speculative reflection.

Indeed, nestled within the analogical margin of the conciliar *horos* are many unexplored issues that the council fathers unwittingly or deliberately chose to bypass. One such issue is the question of the principle of subjectivity and agency within the person of Christ—a problem that we saw Evagrios had tried to address in the *Kephalaia Gnostika*. While the Chalcedonian definition appeared to suggest that the hypostatic union possessed one single center of subjectivity, the council passed no judgment as to this subject's actual identity. Was Christ's subject fully identical with the eternal Logos, or did it emerge only in the wake of the hypostatic union? Did Christ's principle of subjectivity undergo change in the course of his earthly life or after the event of the resurrection? And finally, if the subject of the incarnation was a divine subject, what was the salvific import of Christ's humanity? These questions appear very abstract and remote from the later debate on the veneration of the images, but the way Christ's subjectivity as well as Christ's humanity were conceptualized in the wake of Chalcedon would play a crucial role in determining the outcome of the debate on the legitimacy of icons.

In the earlier part of the fifth century, Cyril of Alexandria (376–444) had insisted on theopaschite formulations that postulated the suffering of the Second Person of the Trinity via his assumption of our common humanity. In his treatise *De Unitate Christi*, the Alexandrian bishop had introduced the important mechanism of the *communicatio idiomatum*, in virtue of which the hypostasis of the eternal Son could experience the physical torment and death that were proper to his humanity while preserving the unchangeable and impassible character of his divinity.[52] In the post-Chalcedonian period,

quite a few authors attempted to reconcile Cyril's assertion of *mia physis* with the Chalcedonian assertion of Christ's two distinct natures, trying to offer a new, comprehensive account of the question of Christ's subjectivity and agency. One of the most intriguing treatments of this issue—even if not, perhaps, the most accessible—can be found in the writings of Leontios of Byzantium (485–543).[53] His *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* postulates a sort of infra-christological dialectic or *perichōrēsis* that echoes Cyril's discussion of the *communicatio idiomatum* but modifies it in a number of important respects.

Leontios's work proceeds in the usual dialogical fashion that Theodore himself would adopt in the *Antirrhetici*, with a "heretic" asking questions that allow the author to expatiate on a variety of different topics. One of Leontios's "heretics" is a Nestorian, who wonders why it should be so improper to postulate two principles of subjectivity in the person of Christ, as long as it is truly the case that neither the eternal Logos nor the flesh of Christ's body underwent any alteration in the moment of the incarnation.[54] The question is couched in semi-Cyrillian terms, reflecting the preoccupation with the preservation of Christ's natures that was typical of the Christology of the time. A simple answer would point to the fact that the lack of alteration in the persons of Christ makes a second principle of subjectivity redundant: the panoply of divine attributes flowing from the hypostasis of the eternal Son do not displace their human counterparts, and as a result Christ's human nature is in no need of a supplementary crutch to support itself in the face of the divinity of the Word. Leontios, however, points out that the relationship between humanity and divinity in the person of Christ could be conceptualized in different manners, drawing inspiration from the relationship between Father and Son.[55]

Choosing this different perspective, Leontios paves the way to a different kind of insight. He notes that certain nouns denote the essence of the subject to which they refer (*eidos*), while other nouns intimate the existence of a relationship (*schesis*).[56] While certain beings are identical in essence, others are distinguished one from the other by number; yet another set are "joined to each other by definition." In this way, Leontios distinguishes two types of relation: one that is characterized by sameness and another that is characterized by difference. The notion of double consubstantiality is thus rephrased in dialectical terms, since within the same Logos, one can discern two manners of relations: "in one, the Logos is in a relationship of sameness with the Father, whereas in the other, the Son is distinguished from the Father." Leontios will apply the term *ousia* to the former, and the term *hypostasis* to the latter.[57]

The distinction between union by nature (*enōsis kat'ousian*) and union according to the principle of subjectivity (*enōsis kath'hypostasin*) puts Leontios in the position to say that Christ "as a whole" (*holos*) is a hypostasis with respect to the Father, in virtue of his divinity joined with his humanity, while he is also a hypostasis with respect to all members of the human race, in virtue of his divinity joined with his humanity.[58] What Leontios has accomplished is the de facto creation of a relational anti-Nestorianism: relational, as the subject of Christ emerges out of a relationship; anti-Nestorian, as there is still only one hypostasis. Postulating an individual human hypostasis in Christ would question the ontological ability of the divine Logos to sustain Christ's humanity, but what really sets Christ's flesh apart from ours is not the preexistent divine reality: rather, it is the *schesis* of relationship that the flesh of Christ has with our own flesh. In this perspective, the principle of unity that sustains and informs the life and mission of the incarnate Christ comes into being, *kata synthesin*. The resulting, composite principle of subjectivity, which is brought together by the blending of distinct ontological realities, is ostensibly in line with the Chalcedonian definition, but it also echoes the Evagrian contention that the *nous* of Jesus mediates between the eternal Logos and the flesh of Christ, so the principle of Christ's action also comes into being by composition.[59]

What happens then to the natures that rest in this newly created reality? Interestingly enough, this composite subject is said to carry the *idiōmata* of both natures.[60] Leontios introduces the notion of *enousion* when he deals with the existence of a subject "within an essence" and develops the parallel notion of *enhypostaton* when he deals with the existence of a nature within a hypostasis. At the same time, Leontios asserts that there is "no nature without a hypostasis" (*ouk estin physis anypostatos*); a nature cannot be contemplated in itself, and while a nature cannot be "accidental (*symbebēkos*)," it always exists within another being.[61] A hypostasis, for its part, indicates an individual who is identified on the basis of certain characteristics. Leontios introduces the term *enhypostaton* to indicate the way in which a particular nature comes to rest within a particular hypostasis. As Christ's humanity cannot be "contemplated" in an abstract sense, Leontios will say that it is enhypostatic,

or in other words, that it is manifested through an individual principle of subjectivity. To complete the picture, it is then possible to say that the humanity of Christ is also anhypostatic, as it lacks its own principle of subjectivity. The hypostasis of the eternal Word, for its part, emerges out of the two natures (*ek duo physesin*), and it is known to us by way of the mediation of their properties.[62]

The question of Christ's subjectivity and its relationship with the two different natures would be taken up again in the seventh century in the writings of Maximos the Confessor (580–662).[63] Maximos's vision was steeped in the wisdom of Chalcedon, but his theological vision was not a mere repetition of Chalcedonian *obiter dicta*, as he also drew elements from unexpected sources: one element was the "Origenist" thinkers whom he had set out to refute, and another was the writings of Leontios. Maximos's preoccupation with the synergy of two distinct, and yet perichoretically interacting wills ensured that his understanding of Christ's hypostasis pays particular attention to the relationship of unity and the duality. As such, Maximos could actually borrow a phrase from Leontios and write that the hypostasis of Christ is not merely subsisting in two natures (*en duabus naturis*) but actually emerges out of two natures (*ex duabus naturis*).[64] At the same time, Maximos emphasized that the subject of Christ's actions preserved an utter continuity—and indeed, identity—with the hypostasis of the eternal Son. While the divine nature of the Second Person of the Trinity is preserved from all shadow of change, the hypostatic union ensures that the divine agency of the Logos can be active in the cosmos in a way that is utterly unprecedented.[65]

In his study of Maximos's theology, Lars Thunberg underscores how for Maximos the hypostatic union involves a reciprocal relationship of complementarity between the two natures of the Logos: God's love for humanity (*philanthrōpia*) makes sure that the eternal Son assumes our common nature, while humanity assumes the divine properties or *idiōmata*. The expression "beautiful reciprocity" (*kalē antistrophē*) intimates this marvelous reversal, whereby the incarnation accomplishes the descent of divinity into the human condition, while the process of *theōsis* brings about the deification of humanity.[66] Maximos mentions that, in the person of Christ, the union of the two natures results in a "new" theandric energy; drawing on a text by the Pseudo-Denys, Maximos notes in the *Opuscula Theologica et Política* that this energy is not a previously nonexistent reality brought about by the

incarnation, but represents the commingling of two ontologically distinct realities.[67]

How does this take place? If the energy of the divine nature has been humanized (*androtheisa*), we no longer see a naked God (*gymnos Theos*), and at the same time we cannot say that in Christ we contemplate a "mere human being" (*psilos anthrōpos*). The Cyrillian reading of the Chalcedonian definition that Maximos embraces here conflates the *hypostasis* of the Word with Cyril's *mia physis*.[68] While Leontios's notion of a subject emerging *kata synthesin* intimated the appearance of a "mixed" ontological subject that was discontinuous with God's pre-incarnational reality, Maximos's composite hypostasis purifies the notion of "composite hypostasis" from its more problematic association and associates composition, or synthesis, with the mode of cognitive access to the incarnate Logos. In other words, according to Maximos, human beings are not able to perceive the divine nature of the Logos directly, but they do so thanks to the mediation of Christ's humanity, which acts as *trait-d'-union* between the Second Person of the Trinity and fallen humanity.

This "asymmetric" reading of Christ's subjectivity, purified of its Origenist taint through Maximos's Chalcedonian understanding of relationality, would gradually become part of the christological tradition. The absence of a human hypostasis is not the "unfortunate" price of the incarnation; it is actually a soteriological necessity, as it guarantees that the hypostasis of the eternal Logos indwells our common human nature and is able to infuse it with the divine energy. At the same time, the relational character of anhypostasy entails that the eternal Logos *acts* in the world through the medium of both natures; and indeed, that the eternal Logos *is known* to us only by way of the medium of both natures. Eventually, it was to this "salvific asymmetry" of the incarnate Christ that Theodore the Studite would turn as he sought to defend the particularity and the representability of Christ's humanity. Before he could do so, however, he had to ensure that anhypostasis would not be hijacked, and systematically misused, by the iconoclastic camp.

Anhypostasis and the Icon: A Fraught Relationship

Anhypostasis, indeed, soon proved to be a double-edged sword, as a number of opponents of the images argued that the absence of a

human hypostasis in Christ indicated clearly that his humanity was not like our humanity, and as such, it could not be represented in an image. The supporters of this idea, who were very active in the eighth and ninth centuries, although they did not leave behind any theological treatises of great weight, would go down in history with the rather peculiar name of *agraptodocetae*: those who believe that Christ cannot be circumscribed and therefore cannot be represented in an icon.

If we read the writings from many of the participants in the second iconoclastic controversy toward the end of the eighth century, we will see that the different parties routinely accused each other of resurrecting the heresies of the past and of falling back into Nestorianism, Monophysitism, and all possible shades of Docetism. In addition, despite the fact that over two hundred years had elapsed since the condemnation of Origenism, the latter was far from dead. From the correspondence of Germanos of Constantinople, who was patriarch under Emperor Leo III, we learn that the emperor had surrounded himself with numerous Asian bishops who had Origenist or semi-Origenist leanings and were therefore suspicious of the use of imagery in all forms.[69] Their influence at court continued under the reign of Emperor Constantine V Copronymous, who earned his less-than-flattering sobriquet thanks to his strenuous opposition to the veneration of icons. According to Patriarch Nikephoros, who would become one of his harshest critics, the emperor questioned how the humanity of Christ could be represented in any way. Constantine claimed that if the images represent the humanity of Christ and not his divinity, they introduced a division in his person;[70] if the image truly represented Christ in the fullness of both natures, the two natures were mingled—and the supporters of the images fell into the Monophysite heresy of Severus[71]—or the divinity was said to be fully circumscribed in the humanity, which of course was a logically untenable proposition. Paradoxically, the iconoclastic emperor was appealing to Chalcedon to defend his position; he claimed that the icon brought to the person of Christ that very "confusion" and "separation" that had been ruled out by the council fathers, so that, to defend orthodoxy, one had to reject the images.[72]

Many of the opponents of the images, however, were actually looking back to an earlier, pre-Chalcedonian understanding of the hypostatic union—one where the humanity of Christ was not preserved in the totality of its characteristics but rather became fully spiritualized and virtually fused into the divinity. If we look at the christological definition of the Council of Hieria, we will find not only a return to an earlier understanding of Christ's composite subjectivity, but even a throwback to an Evagrian reading of infra-christological relationships:

> *As the divinity of the Son has assumed into its own hypostasis the nature of the flesh, the soul of Christ becomes the intermediary between the divinity and the thickness of the flesh; and the soul is also the soul of the divine Logos. The soul and the body have now been deified, and the divinity is now inseparable from either; wherever is the soul of Christ, there is the divinity, and wherever is the body of Christ, there is the divinity.*[73]

As in the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, the soul of Christ mediates between the eternal Logos and the lowly world of the flesh.[74] While Chalcedon affirmed the preservation of both natures in the totality of their characteristics, the Council of Hieria, which claimed to defend orthodox Christology from the alleged Nestorianism of the iconophiles, unwittingly dissolved the humanity of Christ in the embrace of the divinity of the Logos.[75]

It is easy to see why the notion of anhypostasis, which, after all, developed out of Leontios's qualified retrieval of the earlier Origenist vision, would be appropriated by the supporters of this position. The absence of a human center of subjectivity in Christ offered a seemingly reasonable justification to the claim that, in the hypostatic union, the humanity of Christ was radically disembodied—indeed, it is almost deontologized. For the opponents of the images, if Christ were not an individual human being and his body, no less than his soul, had become intimately associated with the person of the Word, the conclusion was inescapable: his body and his soul had become indistinguishable from his divinity, and as such, they could no longer be represented in an image.

Nikephoros's *Antirrhetici*, like many apologetic works, takes great pleasure in highlighting the absurd beliefs of the *agraptodocetae*.[76] Agraptodocetism differed from Docetism because it does not claim that Christ's humanity was a phantasm; however, it also went further from Aphthartodocetism, which affirmed Christ's humanity but denied that it could suffer, since according to the *agraptodocetae*,

Christ "lacked individual characteristics" (*acharaktēriston*), because he was "a man in general" (*anthrōpos katholou*). Nikephoros tells us that according to the *agraptodocetae*, even the womb of the Virgin Mary "had come to escape description" as soon as it had become the dwelling place of the eternal Word.[77]

When Theodore the Studite, alongside all the defenders of the images, finds himself addressing the claims of the iconoclasts, he cannot fail to consider the challenge posed by Agraptodocetism. An understandable temptation would be to let go of the notion of anhypostasy, which had opened the way to all these conceptual distortions. Theodore, however, chooses not to do so, but actually reaffirms Leontios's claim that the humanity of Christ lacks its own hypostasis. To counter the notion of christological agency revived at Hieria, with all its attendant agraptodocetic problems, it was necessary to reaffirm the teaching of anhypostasis, but to do so in light of Maximos's "sanitized" version of Christ's composite subjectivity. In this way, it was possible to assert the general character of Christ's humanity, which undergirded its universal salvific reach, while simultaneously asserting that Christ's human nature was enhypostatized in a particular subject and was therefore representable. At the same time, this strategy underscores the pedagogical value of Christ's two natures: while we cannot have direct access to the hypostasis of the eternal Son, we do so via the mediation of the two natures. The iconic representations of Christ's humanity continue the mystery of the incarnation in time, opening a window into the mystery of the hypostatic union where our humanity partakes in the glory of the divine energies.

Evagrios had taught his followers to escape mental representations of the Godhead, as the latter was above the world of contingency and plurality.[78] The *agraptodocetae* appear to echo his concerns, as they claim that Christ lacks individual characteristics—which would be below the dignity of the Logos—and should only be contemplated "noetically."[79] Theodore adamantly rejects this claim. On the one hand, he agrees with his opponents when they reject the suggestion that Christ was a "mere man" (*psilos anthrōpos*), or that the eternal Logos had "assumed an individual man" (*ton tina tōn anthrōpōn*). The Second Person of the Trinity is the one and only subject of the hypostatic union. At the same time, Theodore insists that the humanity of Christ is enhypostatized in the person of the eternal Logos, and as such it possesses a whole set of characteristics like any other human

individual.[80] The salvific mission of Christ took place at a particular time in history, and in a particular geographic location: Christ ate, and drank, and slept, and did everything that pertains to our common humanity.

The way Theodore addresses the agraptodocetic objections to the representability of Christ's humanity is to reaffirm the notion of anhypostasis in line with the Chalcedonian understanding of Christ's agency, and subsequently to apportion the properties of Christ between the two natures by way of the teaching of *communicatio idiomatum*. Within this christological vision, the subject of Christ's actions is the eternal and unchanging Word of God, which now exists and is known to us "out of two natures."[81] At the same time, through the mechanism of the exchange of properties, Christ's hypostasis preserves all the characteristics of Christ's divinity, such as uncircumscribability and unrepresentability, but it also acquires the properties of Christ's humanity, such as circumscribability and, indeed, representability.[82] In this way, Theodore can respond to the objections raised by Emperor Constantine against the sacred images: in the icons there is no blending or fusion of the natures in a Monophysite manner, as both sets of properties are preserved intact, and there is certainly no Nestorianizing division between the natures, as the properties of both natures are ascribed to the hypostasis that is represented. Theodore even retrieves the old Nestorian term *synapheia* ("association") to talk of the ontological relationship between the natures, but he uses it in an irreproachably orthodox sense, to assert the perichoretic exchange of properties of two distinct realities within the same, undivided subject.[83]

The paradoxical endpoint of this tortuous intellectual process sees a Christology such as that of Leontios—characterized by a problematic Origenist ancestry—turn into a building block for a theology of the hypostatic union, which is almost "Antiochean," to use a well-worn cliché, in its defense of Christ's concrete humanity. Maximos's more "Chalcedonian" interpretation of anhypostasis, and his understanding of Christ's composite subjectivity, allow Theodore to use the *communicatio idiomatum* as an overarching conceptual template to describe the way in which the two natures of Christ relate to each other, thereby securing the legitimacy of Christ's pictorial representation. The implication of this theological vision is that pictorial images of Christ are truly capable of capturing the reality of his indi-

vidual humanity, and they can be considered legitimate portrayals of the incarnate Logos.

Imitatio Christi and Deification in the Wake of Chalcedon

One of the reasons why the question of the veneration of images was so controversial was their centrality in the context of individual religious practice no less than in the liturgical life of the church. As icons were the focus of private and public devotion, their role in the spiritual progress of the individual had to be carefully considered. In the wake of the christological controversy of the fourth and fifth centuries, as well as of the condemnation of Origenist spirituality in the sixth, the debate on the nature of spiritual practice hinged on the question of the purpose and destiny of the particular humanity of the individual Christian. After the debates of the fifth and the sixth centuries on the ontological status of Christ's humanity had led to a more careful articulation of the relationship between the two natures within the mystery of the hypostatic union, it was also important to determine in what way the dialectic of humanity and divinity would unfold in the life of the individual believer as he or she underwent the gradual process of deification.

While for Evagrios the ultimate *telos* of practice was a return to the undifferentiated noetic insight, later "orthodox" Christology would affirm the enduring quality of individual subjectivity, while also noting that individual practitioners could never attain the spiritual level, or the ontological condition, of the incarnate Logos.[84] If salvation is communicated to everyone through the sacrament of baptism, the process of deification (*theōsis*) discloses a different mode of "using" one's own individual nature and is achieved in proportion to the individual's receptiveness to divine grace.[85] This soteriological vision presents Christ's glorified humanity as the ontological paradigm for the deification of the individual, who is called to follow Christ in the simultaneous pursuit of contemplation and the virtues. The notion that the saints partake in the divine attributes lavished on the humanity of Christ through the mystery of the hypostatic union is the reason why saints are worthy of veneration. When, in the *Antirrhetici*, Theodore the Studite offers a rationale for the veneration

of the icon of the saints, he is relying on a theology of deification and of the spiritual life that is rooted in the Chalcedonian paradigm and that, again, finds its highest expression in the works of Maximos the Confessor.

Maximos retrieves the notion of *apatheia* developed by Evagrios and notes that the process of deification cannot take place in us unless our natural abilities have been purified from sin and we have become detached from the passions.[86] Earlier studies of this theme published in the 1940s and 1950s were colored by a Scholastic understanding of the dynamics of grace and nature, as well as by a tendency to view salvation as an extrinsic gift bestowed on humanity in virtues of the sacrifice of Christ.[87] In the *Liber Asceticus*, however, Maximos observes that the saints are those who truly believed in Christ and thus, "through the practice of the commandments, have made Christ himself come to live in them."[88] This understanding of deification is fundamentally christocentric; the eternal Logos is the ontological ground as well as the paradigm of the virtues, so that in those who follow the commandments, Christ becomes incarnate anew. Given that the eternal Word encompasses the *logoi* of the virtues, the saints appear to be "repeated incarnations" (so to speak) of the one eternal Word that became fully manifest in Christ.[89]

Maximos's *Ambigua*—a collection of commentaries on problematic passages from scripture or the church fathers—highlight the connection between deification and obedience, and underscore how our own individual deification is patterned according to the example of Christ's own *kenōsis*.[90] Following the commandment to love one another brings us closer to Christ's own transfigured humanity; letting go of our own ascetic desires and inclinations by way of ascetic practice is a sort of self-emptying that mirrors the kenotic abasement of the eternal Son. This profound symmetry between our ascent and Christ's own descent is paradigmatic of the synergy between divine and human initiative that shapes the spiritual progress of the individual. In a letter to John the Cubicularius, Maximos goes as far as to say that God's incarnation in the virtues of the individual Christian takes a different quality in line with the ethical and existential choices that the individual makes.[91] In this way, it is possible to say that in the persons of the saints, the unique and unchangeable Godhead becomes manifest in an infinite number of different and ever-changing ways. In a startling passage of the *Capita Theologiae et Oeconomiae*, Maximos

goes as far as to say that to the extent that "I remain imperfect and refractory, neither obeying God nor obeying the commandments" (through *praxis*), "nor becoming perfect by way of spiritual contemplation" (through *theōria*), "Christ himself also appears imperfect and refractory," as "I diminish and cripple Him by not growing in spirit."[92]

Within the boundaries of the Evagrian paradigm, the goal of spiritual practice was the elimination of all difference (*diairesis*), whereas in the theology of Maximos the incarnation is actually what secures the preservation of diversity and plurality.[93] The entire world of contingency is redeemed in the incarnation; in the same way as the two natures of Christ continue to exist within the mystery of the hypostatic union, all different members of the human race will be deified but they will preserve their distinct ontological character even after the passing of this world. At first, the notion that ascetic practice and holiness accomplish a sort of "renewed incarnation" might appear to echo the early "Christology by degrees" that was championed by authors such as Paul of Samosata but eventually condemned as incompatible with the Nicene assertion of divine consubstantiality between Father and Son.[94] Nothing, however, could be more distant from Maximos's intentions than a blurring of the ontological distinction between Christ and the individual practitioner. His understanding of *theōsis* asserts the ultimacy of each human hypostasis, and the deification of the individual person is an instance of "mystical symmetry," which miraculously renews, but simultaneously reverses, the event of the hypostatic union. The individual assumes the properties of the divinity, all the while preserving the unbridgeable ontological distinction between the human nature and the divine nature.

The images of the saints that the church offers to the veneration of the faithful are thus a gesture toward the celestial Jerusalem, where the saints are transfigured by the divine energies and dwell with the Lamb for ever and ever. According to Evagrios, our destiny is to return to the embrace of the primordial unity; if this is the case, the images of the saints could not represent the eschatological destiny of the human race, which is called to leave behind the realm of shape and form. According to Maximos, however, our destiny is to share in the glory of Christ, who was crucified and is now risen, and who graciously allows us to partake in the glory of his glorified humanity.[95] As each of us is a different individual, Christ will be manifest in each one of us in a different way; heaven will be a kaleidoscope of infinite kinds of holiness, and the images of the saints on this earth will be a support and a consolation as we struggle to reach what is our true, eternal homeland. If the saints are deified, their images also partake in the divine energies, and the honor that is due to their prototypes should be due to their pictorial representations here on this earth.

Toward the end of the first *Antirrheticus*, when Theodore reminds us that it is right to depict and to honor the images of the saints, he must address the iconoclasts' objection that the memory of saints should rather be honored by following their example and transmitting their teaching.[96] Theodore does not disagree with this point, but he adds that the saints earned this honor by way of martyrdom, or by way of a holy life. In other words, it is their very life that becomes a channel of the divine grace; their very being has been ontologically transformed. If we were merely to commemorate them in words, without honoring their image, we would fail to pay due respect to the extraordinary transformative power of the divine grace that transfigured them and ensured that they would participate in the divine glory.

The *Antirrhetici*: A Christological Treatise

Theodore's *Antirrhetici* are not a systematic exposition of a theology of the image; this work, as well as the other occasional writings on icon veneration authored by Theodore in the course of his life, blends together Christology and spiritual theology in a synthesis characterized by an overarching apologetic thrust.[97] His terminology is the classical terminology of the Chalcedonian controversies: *physis* ("nature") and *prōsopon* ("person") are actually used in preference to *ousia* ("essence") and *hypostasis* (which also indicates the person, as well as the center of subjectivity). A variety of terms are applied to the images in a way that defies consistency: *eikōn* ("image"), *typos* ("type"), *morphē* ("form"), *schēma* ("pattern"), *charaktēr* ("feature"). As noted by Catherine Roth in the introduction to her 1981 translation of the *Antirrhetici*, the term *eikōn* can indicate sacred images, profane paintings, or the relationship of similarity in an abstract sense.[98] At the same time, the term *omoiōma* ("likeness") is sometimes used to indicate the relationship between icon and prototype, and sometimes it is virtually synonymous with the image itself.[99] A crucial terminological choice, however, is the distinction between *latreia* ("adora-

tion," or "worship," in the strict sense of the term), which is due to God alone, and *proskynēsis* ("veneration," or "worship," in a broader sense), which is due to the Virgin Mary and the saints but can also be given to relics and other holy objects—such, indeed, as icons.[100] Theodore buttresses his claims with numerous references to scriptural passages in the Septuagint version and to works by earlier fathers, although, as already noted, some of the citations cannot be identified with certainty.

After the customary disclaimer in which Theodore protests his unworthiness to approach such a lofty topic, the first *Antirrheticus* opens with an affirmation that faith (*pistis*), adoration (*latreia*), and veneration (*proskynēsis*) are all equally due to the three persons of the Trinity, even if the three persons are perceived distinctly because of their hypostatic properties.[101] The text then continues as a conversation between a heretic, who voices the iconoclastic objections to image veneration, and a representative of the orthodox position, who tries to highlight the self-contradictory nature of the iconoclast position or its inconsistency with the tradition of the fathers.

The first *Antirrheticus* touches on a variety of arguments, many of which will be taken up by Theodore over and over again throughout the whole corpus of his writings. The first observation of "the heretic" is that the veneration of images is "a wile that has been transferred by some demonic wile from the Greek tradition into the universal church," thereby taking us back to the times of the veneration of idols. It is certainly no accident that the heretic should repeat the claims of the Council of Hieria almost verbatim, as that council, which had presented the veneration of images as coming from the wiles of the devil, had become the doctrinal benchmark of the iconoclast movement.[102] Theodore agrees with "the heretic" that the divine is "utterly incomprehensible (*aperilēpton*) and uncircumscribable (*aperigrapton*)," and actually strengthens this claim by pointing out how it is manifest to all that the divine nature lacks in "boundaries, limits and forms."[103] Christians are right in condemning the foolishness of the Greeks, who were deceived by demonic cunning, and who, instead of giving the due honor to God, the Creator of all, bowed down to the products of God's creation; to apply circumscription (*perigraphē*) to the divine in the order of theology, as opposed to the new dispensation inaugurated by the incarnation, would be an invention of Greek sophistry (*epinoia*). The error in the iconoclasts' position, however, is that they do not distinguish between *theologia* and *oikonomia*.[104] Because of his great condescension, one of the persons of the Trinity has chosen to assume humanity and to become like one of us, and as a result, "a mingling came into being of what is uncircumscribed with what is circumscribed, of what has boundaries with what is boundless." What is naturally without circumscription because of his divinity has now accepted the natural circumscription of our body: echoing Maximos's dythelite theology.[105] Theodore notes that both humanity and divinity in the hypostatic union become manifest in virtue of their distinct actions (*pragmasin*), without either suppressing the other.

Theodore does not claim that the irruption of the divine realm into our shared human nature at the moment of the incarnation eliminated the Old Testament injunctions against images.[106] The event of the hypostatic union, however, enjoins us to reconsider the context of these prohibitions, which reflected an era when God had not yet chosen to become incarnate and was thus not yet visible in the flesh. The repeated juxtaposition of opposites—the limited and the unlimited, that which is characterized by form and that which is formless, the circumscribed with the uncircumscribable—invites the reader to appreciate the incarnation's disruption of human philosophical categories, much as the adverbs of the Chalcedonian definition—*adiairetōs, asynchytōs, atreptōs,* and *achōristōs*—underscore the inability of human discourse to capture the mystery of the incarnation.[107] In this perspective, the error of the heretics is their unwillingness to accept that the philosophical terms used to hint at the reality of the divine nature must reflect the way in which the latter chooses to relate with the created order.

Another objection that Theodore places in the mouth of "the heretic" shows us again how some iconoclasts resorted to the Chalcedonian definition in an attempt to legitimize their position.[108] "The heretic" notes that if the deity has been united to the flesh by means of the hypostatic union, the uncircumscribable divinity would also have to share in the circumscription of the flesh; to deny this, he alleges, would introduce a kind of *diairesis* in Christ, which is something the fathers at Chalcedon had denied. This is the first time in the *Antirrhetici*, but not the last, that Theodore's defense of icon veneration turns to the issue of the *communicatio idiomatum*.[109] The argument of the iconoclast is that if the divinity can be portrayed in an image of Christ, what is uncircumscribable can be circumscribed, and what

is circumscribable is no longer subject to circumscription. This would be a clear logical contradiction, showing that images oppose reason, no less than revelation. Theodore, however, points out that in the hypostatic union, neither nature "ceases to be what it is," nor is it "transformed into the other," since this would cause the confusion (*synchysis*) that Chalcedon condemns. Christ is "one and the same" in hypostasis (*tē hypostasei*) and is characterized by a "lack of confusion" (*to asynchyton*) in his two natures, "within the limits of their proper boundaries."[110]

Theodore's contention is that the properties of either nature are ascribed to the one hypostasis that sustains them, without in any way being mingled or confused; the divinity of Christ does not die, nor is his humanity immortal; rather, the hypostasis of Christ experiences death in virtues of his human nature, and the same hypostasis is immortal in virtue of his divine nature.[111] Paradoxically, if the locus of the *communicatio idiomatum* were in the natures of Christ, the iconoclasts' objection would be quite correct, and Christ's humanity could not be portrayed in an image. The locus of the *communicatio idiomatum*, however, is the hypostasis, and as a result what we see in the icons is Christ's hypostasis dwelling in a glorified humanity.[112] Theodore's theology of circumscribability and uncircumscribability is merely a development of the Cyrillian strategy of partitive exegesis, which had paved the way for the Chalcedonian definition of a duality of natures, and is now deployed to defend the concreteness of Christ's incarnate humanity.[113]

This issue is taken up again as soon as "the heretic" claims that it is "absurd" to call Christ a "mere man" (*psilanthrōpos*), because "mere men" are characterized by circumscription, and Christ most certainly is not circumscribed.[114] Theodore not only agrees that Christ is not a "mere man" but adds that it would be utter impiety to claim that Christ assumed "one of the members of the human race" (*tōn tina anthrōpōn*), as Christ assumed humanity as a whole, or "the whole nature" (*tēn holēn physin*). The iconoclasts are accusing the orthodox of semi-Nestorianism. From their point of view, if Christ can be portrayed in an image, Christ must have had an individual human nature, but, the iconoclasts continue, we know from Cyril of Alexandria and from Leontios of Byzantium that Christ did not have an individual human nature; hence, they conclude, Christ cannot be portrayed in an image, and those who believe that he can are guilty of heresy. For Theodore, this is

a *non sequitur*. Christ, it is true, did not have an individual human nature; yet, at the same time, Christ's nature was seen "in an individual manner" (*en atomō*), since we read in the Gospels that Christ was seen and was touched by his disciples, and that he went through all the usual activities that are typical of members of humanity.[115]

According to this argument, it is absurd to associate the assertion of Christ's circumscription with a revival of Nestorianism. Christ is circumscribed even if he is not a *psilanthrōpos*; he is not "one of many" but "God made man."[116] Rather predictably, Theodore turns this argument around, and he accuses his opponents of heresy. If they do not accept his position, they are saying that Christ came only "in phantasy," and they are falling back into some sort of Docetism.[117] Theodore is adamant that Christ became incarnate only once, at a particular moment in time and in a particular geographical location, and while Christ had assumed the totality of the human nature through his divine hypostasis, his humanity was invested with specific characteristics that made it distinguishable from other members of the human race.

Some iconoclasts took a different line and claimed that it was degrading to represent Christ using images that were "taken from the material world" (*hylikais hypotypōsesin*); in their opinion, the eternal Word should be considered "only by way of a noetic contemplation" (*en tēi kata noun theōriai*).[118] To this purpose, the iconoclasts even cited the word of the Prophet Habakkuk: "What is the purpose of a sculpture when someone has sculpted it?"[119] It is interesting that the language of "the heretic" should be almost Evagrian, and while there is no explicit reference to Evagrios or to any other Origenist author, the fact that this point should be made in these terms—indeed, in a way that seemingly questions the legitimacy of mental as well as physical imagery—is indicative of the lingering Origenist undercurrent in a lot of iconoclast apologetics. Theodore responds by citing Luke 14:11 and observes that while it is shameful for those who are lowly to exalt themselves, it is equally glorious for those who are above to undergo humiliation. As a result, what we may find repugnant—such as Christ's descent into "blood, bile, and other vile substances" that so appalled Porphyry[120]—actually underscores God's utter glory and condescension toward us. If "noetic contemplation" had been sufficient for our salvation, it would have been enough for Christ to come to us in that manner. As a result, "we would have been deprived of the

appearance of his deeds" and of his suffering, which is so much like ours. Instead, Christ came into the flesh and chose to undergo everything that is typical of humanity; and while the eternal Word did not assume an individual human being, he still chose to become incarnate in the flesh and endure everything that is typical of our circumscribed nature.[121] Theodore's appropriation of the notion of anhypostasis allows him to claim that Christ's humanity had exploded the dialectic of generality and particularity; its generality was made manifest through its particularity, but its particularity in no way impinged on its generality.[122] Indeed, as Theodore reminds us, "as flesh he suffered in the flesh, he drank, and in the same way he ate."[123]

To use more contemporary language, Theodore's overarching concern is the dissolution of the concrete scriptural narrative into a disembodied intellectual intuition, where the incarnation is ultimately redundant. If the story of Christ's life in the flesh is crucial for our salvation, and if this story unfolded in the world of matter, it is certainly not unsuitable to represent it to us by drawing upon the example of nature. The iconoclasts' use of scripture is deeply misguided, as they focus on Old Testament injunctions against idolatry and apply them to images of Christ when the incarnation has brought about an irreversible transformation in the relationship between the divine and the created orders.[124] Theodore contrasts those who are under the law and those who are under grace, and notes that "the things of old" (*ta palai*), such as Sabbath and circumcision—and hence the prohibition against images—cannot be imposed on those who are no longer subject to the law.[125] A radical embrace of visual apophaticism fails to appreciate Christ's very concrete soteriological strategy.

Throughout the *Antirrhetici*, Theodore is always very careful to distinguish what can be said of the Son and what can be said of the Father; it is the incarnate Godhead "in human shape" that can be depicted using "material pigments," not the hypostasis of God the Father, who dwells beyond the realm of matter and form.[126] Theodore mentions the acts of the Quinisext Council, which, in the late seventh century, had addressed this very question and had condemned the practice of representing God the Father as an old man, as well as the custom of painting Christ as a lamb.[127] While these practices were not entirely unscriptural—the former relied on the description of the Ancient of Days in the Book of Daniel, whereas the notion of Christ as lamb is clearly present in John 1 and in Revelation—the council

thought that the warrant of custom was insufficient to justify iconic representations that were not grounded in Christ's assumption of our common humanity. By recalling this decision, even if just in passing, Theodore reminds his readers that his position is in continuity with the broader tradition of the church. At the same time, he is also telling us that the heretics are confusing what can be said of the Father with what can be said of the Son; as the Father never became incarnate, the Old Testament injunctions against images continue to apply to him.

The *Antirrhetici* also discuss the relationship between the Eucharist and the sacred images, which was a highly controversial matter during the first as well as the second iconoclastic crisis.[128] Emperor Constantine V had claimed that Christ could be "represented" only in the liturgical action of the Eucharist, following the command of Christ "to do this in memory of me"; other forms of "representations" were instead illegitimate, because Christ had not commanded them. Theodore's answer is twofold: on the one hand, he notes that it is impossible to apply the term *image* to the eucharistic species, which are not the types (*typoi*), but rather the sacraments (*mystēria*) of truth. On the other hand, as the Eucharist is the synthesis of the economy of salvation, Theodore claims, rather imaginatively, that we are not only enjoined to celebrate this particular mystery—indeed, this can only be done by those who received holy orders—but also to commemorate all mysteries of Christ's life through liturgical actions or other celebrations; commemoration can also take the form of writing down the actions of Christ's life, either by way of ink on a parchment or by way of pigments on some other material. In the words of Basil of Caesarea, "The art of painting silently shows by imitation those things which the words of the story narrates."[129] Christ's injunction to "make memory" of all the events of his life—and therefore not just of the Eucharist—inspired the evangelists to compose the four Gospels. Theodore then asks why nobody ever questioned the decision of the sacred authors to put the actions of Christ in writing, and yet the iconoclasts now question the decision to depict the same actions in an image. Clearly, the composition of the Gospels and the "writing" of the icons are different but equally valid ways to commemorate Christ. Theodore goes even further and claims that it is perfectly legitimate to depict scenes from scripture that no human eye has ever seen—such as the Last Judgment, where "those standing

on the right or on the left have a sadder or more joyful countenance"—as well as angels, about whose aspect the Word of God gives us few and scant information. Theodore justifies this practice, noting that there is no substantial difference between what is apprehended by the mind and what is apprehended by the senses such as hearing and sight; hence, we can complement with the imagination what we learn from the scriptures by the way of the intellect.[130]

A final important point in the first *Antirrheticus* is the question of whether, or in what way, the divinity of Christ is ontologically present in the image.[131] "The heretic" wonders whether the divinity of Christ indwells the icon according to the nature (*physikōs*), so that icon and divinity would become the object of joint veneration, as is already the case with the divinity of Christ and his flesh (*sarx*). Theodore responds that the way in which the divinity of Christ is present in the image is very different from the way in which the two natures of Christ are joined in the hypostatic union. In the former case, the connection (*synapheia*) of the two natures ensures that the divine hypostasis is subject to the circumscription of the flesh; as such, the two natures are honored jointly (*synaptikōs*), even as each nature preserves its own ontological integrity. In the case of the image, however, the flesh of Christ is not ontologically present. As a result, the divinity of Christ indwells the sacred image in the same way as it is present in all beings: "on the basis of the analogy (*kata analogian*) of the natures that receive it." The divinity is not present in the image in virtue of a natural union (*physikē enōsei*) but in virtue of a relational participation (*schetikē metalēpsei*).[132] As the natures that receive the divinity differ, so will veneration (*proskynēsis*) be of many different types (*polyschidēs*); while proper worship (*latreutikē*) belongs to God alone, veneration will differ according to the intention (*dia tēs dianoēseōs*).

The organization of the second *Antirrheticus* differs from the first, as every paragraph of this second treatise begins with a statement of the "orthodox" interlocutor. This is immediately challenged by "the heretic," giving rise to a rejoinder by "the orthodox" at the beginning of the following paragraph. While there is a substantial amount of repetition, the second *Antirrheticus* helps us understand the role and the function of tradition in the mind of Theodore, who constantly stresses that his theological position is in continuity with the legacy of the earlier church fathers. A recurrent point in the second *Antirrheticus* is the claim that Christ, having become like us in all

things, is also "the prototype of his own image," even if "this is not written in these very terms" (*tē lexei*).[133] "The heretic," of course, observes that nowhere in scripture is it said that Christ is the prototype of his own image; in a similar way, this claim was not included in the Nicene Creed (which is here called "the profession of faith," *homologia tēs pisteōs*). Theodore responds that many teachings that are not included in scripture are of the same weight as teachings that are: the obvious example is the teaching of *homoousia*, but Theodore also mentions the divinity of the Holy Spirit and the teaching that Mary is the Mother of God—both of which, he adds, were formally defined when the church needed to oppose certain heretical teachings.[134]

Continuing on the same point, "the heretic" tries to defend his claim from a different angle, observing that Christ is not a mere man and therefore cannot be a prototype.[135] Theodore responds that Christ's universal humanity does not deny his circumscribability, and as such he can be the prototype of an image in the same way as every human being can be a prototype. For "the orthodox," the adoration of Christ and of his imprint (*ektypōma*) are one and the same; everything that can be said "synonymously" of the prototype will then be said "homonymously" of the image.[136] Theodore also applies this to the images of the cross: if images receive the same veneration as their prototype, the crosses we use for private devotion, or in liturgical contexts, should be given the same veneration as the true cross of Christ.[137] In support of this point Theodore cites a number of passages from the Pseudo-Denys, Basil of Caesarea, and Athanasios of Alexandria.[138]

The third *Antirrheticus* does not follow the dialogical structure of the previous ones, and Theodore himself notes at the very beginning that he composed this work sometime after the first two sections. Theodore develops his argument by way of a series of syllogisms, thereby summarizing the chief points of discussion from the first and second *Antirrhetici*. Part A reviews the arguments for Christ's pictorial representability using the customary strategies derived from the Christology of Chalcedon but also resorting to more speculative arguments from philosophy and linguistics. The chief point is, once more, the claim that in virtue of the *communicatio idiomatum*, Christ can be circumscribed and as such he can be portrayed in an image without any injury to the unity of the natures or to the distinction of their properties. The earlier debate on the difference between image and

prototype provide the chief focus of Part B, in which Theodore reflects on the nature and purpose of artificial images. While emphasizing the difference in essence between the image and the prototype, Theodore also stresses that image and prototype share the same likeness (*homoiōsis*): the likeness of Christ is ontologically present in the icon, and the likeness of the icon is ontologically present in Christ. Part C builds on the preceding section and concludes that as there is an ontological relationship between image and prototype—albeit the relationship is not one of consubstantiality or of equality in dignity—the veneration of images is justified, as the honor that is paid to the icon ultimately ascends to the prototype. Part D insists that the veneration that is due to the icon and the veneration that is due to Christ are actually one and the same, and this in no way constitutes idolatry, as those who venerate an image are venerating a reality that is already ontologically present in the prototype.

Once more, this final *Antirrheticus* focuses on the dialectic of circumscribability and uncircumscribability that flows from a careful deployment of the *communicatio idiomatum*.[35] Theodore uses this notion to challenge the iconoclastic claim that the incarnate Christ cannot be depicted in an image—a claim reflecting the iconoclasts' poor understanding of the ontological relationship between humanity and divinity. On the one hand, the third *Antirrheticus* deploys a very high christological rhetoric, underscoring the anhypostatic character of his humanity as well as the role of the eternal Logos as the subject of Christ's every action. On the other hand, as already noted, Theodore's driving intention is to defend a very "concrete" understanding of the hypostatic union, which not only affirms the presence of the Son's full-fledged divinity in the person of the incarnate Christ, but also emphasizes the presence of a very concrete, and thus "describable" and "representable," humanity.[36]

Theodore's theology is therefore a theology of the image to the extent that it is also a theology of the incarnation; and it is a theology of the incarnation not only because it explores the inner dynamics of the hypostatic union, but also because it underscores the soteriological import of this event for the members of the Christian community, who are able to access the ongoing redemptive value of the life of Christ through the iconic representation of the events of his life. As noted in the previous section, Theodore's theology of the icon is also a profoundly spiritual theology, presenting the veneration of images

as a devotional and liturgical entry point into the eschatological reality where our humanity will be embraced and transfigured by the divine.

Theodore's Other Apologetic Writings and the Invention of the Iconophile Tradition

Theodore's remaining works on iconoclasm are less widely known than the *Antirrhetici*, largely because of their unavailability in modern translations. What we find in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* is probably only a selection of his theological production on the topic, much of which probably took the form of occasional writings that have not been preserved.[37] After the ninth century, once the memories of the iconoclastic crises faded away, Theodore was remembered mainly for his work of monastic reform; his writings on the question of the images tended to receive far less attention, and John Damascene's *Treatise on the Holy Images* became the standard reference work for the orthodox teaching on the icons.[38] While the *Antirrhetici* contains the most extensive treatment of his theology of the image, the other works afford us a glimpse into the world of Byzantine apologetics, where epigrams, letters, and theological pamphlets were the chief vehicles for theological discourse and polemic. The *Seven Chapters against the Iconoclasts*, the *Questions Posed by Theodore to the Iconoclasts*, as well as the collage of verse and prose that carries the title *Refutations and Subversions* (*Elegchoi kai Anatropē*), show us Theodore at the very center of the controversy on the icons. They also show how Theodore envisages his theological position: much as Maximos the Confessor in the seventh century had presented himself as working in perfect agreement with the Chalcedonian tradition, Theodore understands his work as firmly in continuity with the teaching of the seven ecumenical councils that have come before him. While John Damascene had passed away in the year 749, long before the Second Council of Nicaea proclaimed the legitimacy of sacred images, Theodore is writing after the highest deliberative organ of the universal church had already pronounced itself in favor of icon veneration; because the iconoclasts rejected the decisions of this assembly, Theodore felt that it was his duty to emphasize the perfect congruence between the practice of venerating images, on the one hand,

and the faith of the church as it had been proclaimed by the earlier councils, on the other.

The *Seven Chapters* is a sort of systematic summary of the *Antirrhetici*;[103] each section addresses the question of icon veneration from a different perspective, in response to a particular objection on the part of the iconoclasts that is mentioned in the heading. An important theme, as in the first *Antirrheticus*, is the contrast between the old and the new economy: enemies of the images fail to appreciate the progressive nature of God's revelation to humanity, as well as the fact that there is a fundamental difference between the purviews of *theologia* and *oikonomia*. The second chapter contains another attack against the *agraptodocetae*, who complain that the Gospels are silent about Christ's physical appearance but forget that there are many details of Christ's life that are not described explicitly, and yet no one questions that they actually took place. Theodore also launches on a rather fanciful exegetical analysis of the passage in Matthew 22 where Christ tells Peter to pay the tribute "for me and for you," which Theodore interprets as meaning "for my image and for yours"—arguably the least convincing aspect of Theodore's argument in favor of Christ's pictorial representation. While many of the arguments in the *Seven Chapters* are not particularly original, the fourth and the fifth chapters give us a glimpse of the impact of iconoclasm on liturgical life: the enemies of the images thought that blessings of children or exorcisms could only be carried out with a cross and not with an icon. Theodore observes, of course, that as the priest is himself a type of Christ, the cross and the icon are in an ontological relationship.

The *Questions Posed by Theodore to the Iconoclasts* is a brief text in fifteen paragraphs, in which Theodore sets out to expose the inconsistency and the untenable consequences of the teaching of his opponents by way of a *reductio ad absurdum*.[104] As in the third *Antirrheticus*, Theodore frequently resorts to the teaching of the *communicatio idiomatum*, exploring the way in which the dialectic of circumscribability and uncircumscribability makes the pictorial representation of the incarnate Christ ontologically possible, while also furnishing a rationale for legitimizing its veneration.[105] Paragraphs seven and nine, in particular, attack the claims of those iconoclasts for whom Christ is characterized solely by uncircumscribability and therefore cannot be represented in any way. Theodore associates this position with "the heresy of Mane the Persian" and accuses them of denying the reality of

the incarnation. As mentioned above in the discussion of the *Antirrhetici*, the ascription of the properties of the natures to the hypostasis of the eternal Word ensures the dual consubstantiality of the incarnate Christ, while also preserving the integrity of both natures.

The *Letter to Plato* gives Theodore the opportunity to reflect one more time on the relationship between the veneration of the image and the veneration of the prototype.[106] Theodore cites *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, in which the Pseudo-Denys reflects in high Neo-Platonic terms on the relationship between image and archetype.[107] He then goes on to expatiate on the difference between a natural and an artificial image: while the former does not have a natural distinction from its prototype, but merely one of identity, the latter shares a hypostasis with its prototype but is distinct from it in terms of substance. Of course, the paradigmatic example of a natural image is the eternal Son, who is the image of the Father, whereas icons of Christ and the saints are examples of artificial images. The problem with some iconoclasts is that they follow Origen in thinking that the only true image is a natural image, when in fact artificial images, while ontologically different, are also legitimate.

The *Refutations and Subversions*, for their part, are quite different from all other works included in this volume.[108] In the first part of this work, Theodore refutes the argument brought forth by a number of iconoclastic authors in a series of poems that are reproduced at the beginning of the work. The identity of the authors cannot be determined with certainty, although "John" may be John the Grammarian (780–847), who is also the target of harsh criticism in the *Celebratory Canon*. It is also not impossible that the author of these compositions may be Theodore himself, seeking to set up a target for his own apologetic eloquence. At the same time, the iconoclastic poems do not address the question of sacred-image veneration directly, but contrast the fabrication and the veneration of the icons with the practice of venerating the cross. Most of the poems by the iconoclasts, as well as some of the poems expressing the "orthodox" point of view, follow an elaborate pattern, where the first, middle, and last letter of each line, as well as the middle word of each stanza, compose a sentence that is used by the author as the title.

The first poem—attributed to "John"—is of particular interest, as the author claims that in refusing to honor the images, but in giving honor to the cross alone, the iconoclasts—represented by the

emperors "who carry crowns"—are actually following the example of the authors of the Gospels, who praised Christ "in golden letters" but did not pay any attention to "lowly matters"—presumably details such as Christ's physical appearance.[149] This is the position of the *agraptodocetae* lambasted by Nikephoros in his *Antirrhetici*. Theodore responds that the authors of the Gospels did not think it beneath their dignity to describe Christ reclining in the manger, eating, or sleeping; in fact, so as to describe these events, belonging to the economy of our salvation, they actually had to raise "the eyes of their minds" to what they were contemplating. Theodore neither addresses the claim of the iconoclast from a theoretical point of view, as in the *Antirrhetici*, nor does he try to highlight their inconsistency, but he comments in a style that is close to a theological stream of consciousness, citing from the scripture and the fathers as he sees fit, and frequently directly attacking his adversaries. This different style of argumentation—veering away from the speculative toward the genre of the invective—gives Theodore more leeway to expatiate on the viciousness of the iconoclasts' views, which are presented as conceptually mistaken, but also as ethically and spiritually flawed. The enemies of the images are endangering their own salvation, and Theodore feels he has a duty to expose their views for what they really are.

Another interesting poem in the *Refutations and Subversions* is the one by "Sergios," who recounts how Moses raised a type of the cross and with this type defeated the enemy, while in the present the true cross of Christ will save from perdition those who are "spiritually wounded" by the sacred images.[150] While a reader may initially associate Moses raising the type of the cross with the episode of the bronze serpent,[151] it becomes clear from Theodore's comment that Sergios is referring to the episode of Moses praying with his arms outstretched in the shape of the cross and thereby defeating the Amalekites.[152] Theodore responds that it is foolish to honor the cross, but not the image of the one who triumphed on the cross; the iconoclast, whose teaching is as dangerous as a violent flood, detaches the image of Christ from the weapon he used to defeat evil, so that Christ, echoing Matthew 12:26, "is now divided against himself." The belief that one may venerate the cross but withhold honor from the image of the Savior is thus exposed as inconsistent, since it was the incarnate Christ who procured our salvation through his suffering. To call the sacred

images "arrows thrown with an evil intention" is not only illogical but utter blasphemy.

While the *Refutations and Subversions* preserve some of Theodore's poetic compositions on the question of the images, the more interesting part of the work arguably begins at paragraph 17, where Theodore reproduces an iconoclastic profession of faith and goes on to refute it point by point, only to conclude with his own "orthodox" profession. The iconoclastic "declaration" (*hypographē*) professes to accept the six ecumenical councils; it does, however, reject "the meeting held under Tarasios"—a transparent reference to the Second Council of Nicaea that was held in 787—and accepts as binding the decisions of the iconoclastic Council of Hieria, which had met in the year 754 at the church of Hieria and at St. Mary in Blachernae.[153]

This text is clearly a product of the second wave of iconoclasm that shook the empire in the early ninth century. While at the time of the first iconoclastic crisis no ecumenical council had officially affirmed the legitimacy of images, even if the Quinisext Council had addressed some questions of iconography, by the time of Theodore, opponents of the images had to confront the fact that the church's highest deliberative body had pronounced itself in favor of icon veneration. As a result, iconoclasts found themselves in need of an alternative ecclesial genealogy for their position—a narrative that would establish the orthodoxy of their views and brand their opponents with the mark of heresy. The enemies of the images stressed, of course, that they accepted everything that the first six councils had taught but regarded the Second Council of Nicaea as canonically irregular, and they chose to view as binding the two iconoclastic assemblies held during the reign of Constantine V.

In the rest of the *Refutations*, Theodore exposes the untenable nature of this narrative and replaces it with an orthodox alternative that alone, in his opinion, is in line with the tradition of the earlier fathers. Theodore notes that it is typical of heretics to claim that they accept the teachings of the holy fathers who came before them, but this display of deference toward the tradition will not fool those who truly live according to the orthodox faith. Both scripture and the fathers, however, teach the legitimacy of icon veneration. Theodore proves this once more with a series of citations from the Letter to the Hebrews, the writings of the Pseudo-Denys and the Cappadocian

fathers, and other more obscure texts that he attributes to Athanasios and Gregory of Nyssa but are now generally regarded as spurious.[84] The assembly at Hieria—which, as we know, had actually retrieved an older, semi-Evagrian understanding of Christ's subjectivity—cannot possibly represent the true orthodox faith, as its decrees fell outside the consensus of what constitutes orthodoxy.

According to Theodore, there is only one faith that has been taught from the beginning to the present, and this faith is the faith of the Council of Nicaea, which was merely expanded by the later councils as the need arose from time to time to counter the threat of heresy.[85] Nicaea did not immediately teach the truth of Mary's divine maternity, which was proclaimed at Ephesus; and even Chalcedon, which asserted that Christ was fully consubstantial with the Father in terms of his divinity and fully consubstantial with us in terms of his humanity, did not pronounce itself on the question of Christ's wills, which would only be defined by the Sixth Ecumenical Council in the seventh century. Whatever was not taught earlier, however, was already implicit in the teaching of the earlier councils. As such, according to Theodore, the First Ecumenical Council, in asserting that Christ had become incarnate and had embraced the fullness of humanity, had already asserted the legitimacy of icon veneration. The faith of the First Council of Nicaea is the same faith as that of the Second Council that was also held in Nicaea over four hundred and fifty years later; the faith of Hieria, however, is a different faith—one that places itself outside the boundaries of orthodoxy, as it does not fully accept the real import of the incarnation.

Theodore's chronological position at the end of what could be called without exaggeration the great adventure of early Christian thought ensures that he can take a long view of the history of doctrinal development. The fact that he can look back with confidence at a conciliar definition of the legitimacy of icon veneration places him in a different position from his great predecessor John of Damascus, whose writings on the icon were composed at a time when no official pronouncement on the question had yet been made. What we find in Theodore's writings against iconoclasm is a great work of synthesis, carried out by someone who knows how to weave together different insights from the great spectrum of the Chalcedonian tradition, and who never wavers in his conviction of the fundamental coherence of his vision. In the dialectic of circumscribability and uncircumscribability, as well as in the theology of anhypostasy whose ancestry went all the way back through Maximos and Leontios to the mysterious pages of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, Theodore found a way to assert the general character of Christ's humanity while simultaneously affirming the salvific particularity of the incarnation and the propaedeutic value of the sacred images. If, more than four hundred years earlier, Evagrios had warned his fellow monks ensconced in the depths of the Egyptian desert that "the Deity had no quantity or form" and that all representations of the divine had to be rejected as demonic,[86] Theodore can reassure us that God did not disdain to enter into the world of matter and that sacred images afford us a glimpse of this encounter between humanity and divinity. Like few other theologians, Theodore could make his own the words of the First Letter of John, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life."[87]

The Triumph of Orthodoxy

In the year 842, sixteen years after Theodore's death, the veneration of icons was definitively restored by a synod held in Constantinople under the leadership of the Dowager Empress Theodora (815–67) and Patriarch Methodios (788–846). On February 19 of that year, at the end of the first session, all members of the synod took part in a triumphal procession from St. Mary in Blachernae, which had been the scene of the iconoclastic Council of Hieria in 754, to the Basilica of Hagia Sophia, carrying the icons of Christ, the Theotokos, and numerous saints. This procession took place on the First Sunday of Great Lent, which until that time had been devoted to the commemoration of Old Testament figures such as Moses, Aaron, and Saul. The synod held in Constantinople decreed, however, that from that year onward, this day should be marked by a perpetual feast commemorating this event. This inaugurated the liturgical tradition of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, which the Christian East celebrates to this day.[88]

Theodore could not witness these events, as he had passed away sixteen years previously. The Byzantine tradition, however, would forever associate his name with this liturgical celebration and would

attribute to his pen one of the most important liturgical texts used by the church on this day. As the faithful process around the church carrying the icons, a canon is sung that begins:

> *Let us sing, O faithful, a song as an action of grace to the God and benefactor of all, because He raised a horn of salvation, and a great power, to protect the true faith.*
>
> *Truly the divine grace has been shown to the world, and glory and honor are manifest; and for this reason the Church rejoices, having put on the stole, of which she had earlier been stripped.*
>
> *The holy fathers, having woven again the garment of Christ, which had earlier been torn apart by John, the seducer and the maker of poisons, gave it back to the church.*[89]

It is highly unlikely that Theodore should be the author of this text, which stretches over eight odes and could only have been written after the battle for the legitimacy of the icons had been definitely won. A more likely author is Patriarch Methodios, who had prevailed over the iconoclastic faction and had restored peace to a church torn apart by decades of strife; or perhaps this celebratory hymn is the product of some unknown iconophile monk, who had endured long persecution for his convictions and was now expressing his joy in seeing his position vindicated. Yet, in the same way as Maximos the Confessor had been the target of harsh persecution for his dythelite conviction but had been rehabilitated posthumously at the Third Council of Constantinople,[90] Theodore's struggle in defense of the images was now finally acknowledged to be no less and no more than an expression of the unadulterated faith of the church. During the procession for the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the faithful sing:

> *Having taken back the incarnate form of the Lord, the Church exults and rejoices with her children; it has received from him the ensigns of victory, the symbols of orthodoxy.*

It was only fitting then that on this day the liturgy should mention the name of Theodore as one of the holy fathers who had preserved the treasure of the orthodox faith.

WRITINGS ON ICONOCLASM

FIRST REFUTATION OF THE ICONOCLASTS

Since a new-fangled heresy is up in arms against us, barking against the truth, and instilling agitation in unstable minds by way of vain talk,[1] it is only proper that whosoever has the ability to speak should do so, rather than remain silent.[2] A speaker might conceivably decide to perform the two following tasks: he could strengthen his own discernment somewhat, exploring and bringing together the supporting arguments of the matter at hand; and he could then share his discoveries with others, if there be any who would lend their ears. Thus, while I am utterly inadequate to both endeavors, relying on the prayers and the exhortations of my elders, I will attempt to express my opinion (*hypolēpsis*), for what the latter is worth.[3] The theologian claims that "it is better to offer one's modest contribution than to let go of the whole matter";[4] this is all the more true as the issue at hand was not explained exhaustively in my *Invective* (*Sklēreuthēn*).[5] Thus, this debate will be continued by opposing our teaching to that of our adversary, hoping that through the juxtaposition, as through some kind of investigative procedure, the corrupt and deceitful mark of impiety may be cast off from the pious and undefiled character of truth. Yet, "The Lord will grant speech to those who bring the good news to a great power," if, unworthy as I am, I may quote scripture as I begin my treatise.[6]

1. *Orthodox*: You should know, my hearers, that among us Christians there is one faith (*pistis*), and one adoration (*latreia*), and one veneration (*proskynēsis*): the one that is addressed to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,[7] because concerning the nature (*physis*)[8] of the deity, what is venerated is one, and in the same way, according to tradition (*synēpeia*),[9] those that are intellectually perceived according to their hypostatic character (*idiotēs*) are three.[10]

II. *Heretic*: "It is not one at all, as our piety has proved to have a multiplicity of objects (*polyproskynēton*) in virtue of the erection of images, a tradition that has been transferred by some demonic wile from the Greek tradition into the whole church, bringing about the veneration of idols."[11] The divine is utterly incomprehensible and uncircumscribable, as every theologian agrees.

Orthodox: To the claim that the divine is incomprehensible (*aperilēpton*) and uncircumscribable (*aperigrapton*),[12] one may add that the divine is also lacking in boundaries, limits, and forms, and one may also use any other term signifying the privation of what is not proper to God; this is evident to everybody. It is only appropriate to say with scripture, "What fellowship does light have with darkness, or what agreement does Christ have with Belial?"[13] Or indeed, what agreement do sacred images have with idols of demons? Before the effects, it would then be appropriate to honor and venerate their causes, such as Astarte, and Chamos, the curse of the Sydonians.[14] And similarly, we should also honor Apollo, Zeus, Chronos, and the other various gods of the Greeks, and as the latter, because of demonic cunning (*kakotechnia*), had transferred their ignorant veneration from God the creator to the products of his creation, scripture says that "they gave honor to the creation instead of the creator,"[15] and that they plunged into the same abyss of polytheism.[16]

For us, however, there is only one God, whom we venerate as Trinity. As far as the teaching of theology is concerned,[17] beware, lest you devise some kind of circumscription or comprehension—this was an invention of Greek thought (*epinoia*)[18]—when one cannot even have a grasp of God's very existence, or what it consists of, as the Godhead alone can have an understanding of itself. But because of his great goodness (*agathotēta*), one of the Trinity has come into human nature, becoming like us; and in this way, there came to be a mingling of what cannot be mingled, and a joining of what cannot be joined; in other words, [a union] of what is uncircumscribed with what is circumscribed, of what has boundaries with what is boundless, of what is limitless with what has limits, of what escapes form with what is comfortably subject to form. Truly, this is a paradox; for this reason Christ is depicted in images, and what is invisible is seen; he who in his proper divinity exists without circumscription accepts the natural circumscription of our body. Both aspects reveal what they are by

means of their actions, and neither falsifies what it is, as is alleged by your claim.[19]

III. *Heretic*: But when the iconophiles circumscribe God bodily, they deny that God remains uncircumscribed. If the deity had been united to the flesh by means of a hypostatic union, it is necessary that the uncircumscribable divinity should share in the circumscription (*perigraphē*) of the flesh. It is not possible to divide one from the other, otherwise one would introduce some detestable manner of division (*diairesis*).[20]

Orthodox: According to your erudite claim (*philologēma*),[21] neither was it the case that what became circumscribed could remain uncircumscribed even as it was wrapped in swaddling garments, nor could the same remain invisible in the act of being seen, even as it was beheld, nor could it remain intangible in being touched even as it was touched, nor could it remain impassible as it suffered even as it was crucified, nor could it remain immortal as it was put to death even as it was crucified. In the same way, you should consider that the divine nature remained uncircumscribed even as it was circumscribed. Indeed, these are properties (*idiōmata*) in the same way as the others are: the ones belonging to the uncircumscribable nature are those wherein Christ is acknowledged to be God, whereas the ones of the circumscribed nature are the ones in which Christ is acknowledged to be divine.[22] Neither modifies the other, or ceases to be what it was; nor is it the case that either is transformed into the other, as in this case the confusion (*synchysis*) would arise from that which we have fled; but he is one and the same in his hypostasis, and he is characterized by a lack of confusion (*to asynchyton*) in his natures, within the limit of their proper boundaries.[23] Thus you must accept the notion of circumscribability; otherwise, you must let go of terms such as *visible*, *tangible*, or *comprehensible*, as well as all other similar terms; if you did that, it would be clear that you would have rejected the very notion that the Word became flesh, which is utter impiety.

IV. *Heretic*: To call Christ a mere human being (*psilos anthrōpos*) is neither here nor there. The fact of being circumscribed is a characteristic of a mere human being; but given that Christ is not circumscribed, he is clearly not a mere human being.[24]

Orthodox: You appear to indulge in a word game when you bring forth your beloved term *uncircumscribable* (*philaperigrapton*), or when you counter our argument with a non-argument, or try to prove what is not subject to proof, or deploy your logical reasoning against what cannot be demonstrated.[26] Hence, you should by all means get out of here. Christ has not been generated as a mere man; no one who belongs to the number of the pious would ever say that he assumed one out of the members of the human race (*tôn tina anthrôpôn analabein*);[28] rather, he assumed human nature as a whole, or the whole nature (*kath'holou, tên holên physin*); and yet this nature was seen in an individual manner (*en atomô*)—for otherwise how could he be seen?—and according to this nature he is then seen and described, touched and circumscribed, he eats and drinks, he grows and matures, works and takes a rest, sleeps and walks, experiences hunger and thirst, weeps and perspires, and does whatever else one who is a human being may experience at all. Therefore Christ is circumscribed, even if he is not a mere human being (he is not one of the many, but God become a human being); else those whom you follow, and who say that Christ only came in appearance and as it were in a phantasy, would be attacked by the swift dragons of heresy.[27] And yet, if he is truly God made man, he is also uncircumscribed, so the impious dog who laughably suggests that Christ had his origin from Mary may be chased off.[29] This is indeed the new mystery of the economy: an encounter (*synodos*) has taken place between the divine and the human nature in the one hypostasis of the eternal Word, which preserves in an intact manner the properties of each in the undivided (*adiairetô*) union.

V. *Heretic*: In the scriptures, however, the erection of simulacra is utterly forbidden, for it says, "Thou shalt make no idol for thyself, nor any likeness or whatever is in the heaven above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not venerate them; nor shalt thou worship them, for I am the Lord thy God."[29]

Orthodox: But when was this spoken, and to whom? Before grace was given, and to those who were under the law[30] and were being inducted into the monarchy of one person;[31] when God had not yet appeared in the flesh, and the ancients were protected from the idols of the Gentiles; indeed these things were laid down as law for those who

through their forefather Abraham had formed a chosen people, having fled the abyss of polytheism. Indeed one is God and Lord of all, "whom no one has seen or can see," as scripture says; of him there is no description, or likeness, or circumscription, or determination, nor any of the things that come within comprehension by way of human reasoning (*dianoia*).[32] About this scripture could say most clearly, "To whom did you compare the Lord? And to which similitude did you liken him?"[33] I forego to point out that what was utterly proscribed in the case of God was not proscribed in all other cases. Indeed, he who had issued this prohibition to Moses during his vision (*tô hierophantê Môsei*) would then command him, "Thou—He indeed said—shalt make two chiseled Cherubim in gold, on the two extremities; the cherubim shall extend their wings above, overshadowing with their wings the seat of mercy, their face turned one toward the other…and there I will make myself known to you, and I shall speak to you."[34] And in Leviticus: "Make yourself a serpent, and set it on a sign post; and if a serpent were to bite a man, whoever was bitten, looking at it, would be saved. And so Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a sign post; and it came to pass, that if a serpent bit a man, and he would look at the bronze serpent, he would live."[35] Mark well what we find in scripture: even if the angels are not in the flesh like us, and even if the serpent differs in appearance in virtue of its monstrous shape, the latter was represented in a mysterious manner (*ainigmatôdôs*) as a type of Christ.[36] So, if God in ancient times condescended to disguise himself in such manner so as to heal those that were bitten, how could it not be seemly or pleasing to him to raise up the icon of the bodily form (*idea*) in virtue of which he has become a human being? And if the monstrous type merely by the act of being seen could cure, how could the sacred image of Christ, by being looked at, not hallow those who look at it?

VI. *Heretic*: God then falls into contradiction and opposition with himself.

Orthodox: What folly! The negative command (*apophasis*) concerns the likening of the Godhead to those objects of creation such as, for instance, the sun, the moon, the stars, or whatever else is used to model idols; the positive command (*kataphasis*) aims at leading Israel symbolically, as far as possible, toward the contemplation and worship

of the one God by means of sculpted and shaped supports. Is the very pattern of the whole tent not a clear foreshadowing of worship in the Spirit, adumbrated by means of symbolic visions to the great Moses by the God of all?[37]

VII. *Heretic*: It is an offense and a degradation to represent Christ in types drawn from the material world (*hylikais hypotypōsesin*). Let him rather remain in a noetic contemplation (*en tēi kata noun theōriai*), so that he should be formed (*morphoutai*) in us as the Holy Spirit inspires in us some sort of divine formation through sanctification and righteousness. Scripture says, in fact, "What is the purpose of a sculpture when someone has sculpted it? He has made something of metal, and a liar, because the maker trusts its own creation."[38] And further, "Because it is a tree cut from a forest, the work of a craftsman, the result of fusion, of gold and silver."[39]

Orthodox: You obviously love not to move away from repetition, or perhaps even blindness, maliciously moving from one thing to the next. What you call indecent and repugnant is indeed worthy of God and elevated because of the sublimity of the Divine Mystery. Is it not the case indeed that it is glorious for those who are above to undergo humiliation, in the same way as it is shameful for those that are lowly to exalt themselves?[40] In this way, the circumscription of our own body, embraced out of a most magnanimous condescension toward us, is to the glory of Christ, who remains on the pinnacle of his proper divinity, adorned by his immaterial indescribability. He who had established everything became matter, or indeed, flesh. And he did not disdain what he had chosen to become or what he had chosen to be named after, namely, matter, and the fact that matter can be circumscribed. Concerning the claim that intellectual contemplation is sufficient, or that Christ would be formed in us again by the Holy Spirit—this belongs to the discussion of the topic of baptism.[41] And, in any case, we are not talking of the impression onto us of the very stamp of the hypostasis of God the Father but of the representation for us of the image in human shape using material pigments. If indeed the noetic contemplation were to suffice, it would have been enough for him to come to us in this manner, and thereby we would have been deprived of the appearance of his deeds, if he had not come in a bodily manner, and of his sufferings, which were undeniably like ours. But we have said enough of this. As flesh he suffered in the flesh, he drank, and in the same way he ate; he did all the things that each human does, except for sin.[42] And so what in your opinion is unseemly is truly honor to the highly praised and exceedingly glorious Word. Cease then to cast scriptural passages against us in an ignorant manner, taking those that are spoken against the Greeks in regard to the idolatrous shapes and misapplying them to the image of Christ! Who then who has a sane mind (*noun echōn*) would not distinguish the difference (*diaphora*) between an idol and an icon?[43] The fact that one is darkness and the other is light? That the one is deceitful and the other lacking in deceit? That one is the mark of polytheism and the other the clearest mark of the divine economy?

VIII. *Heretic*: Why is what is written about the cross not also written about the image? "The word of the cross—he says—is folly to those that are condemned, but to those that are saved, it is the power of God."[44] And he also adds, "Far be it from me to glory, except in the cross of Christ!"[45] and many other things are similarly celebrated by the verses of scripture. Where then will you find such a passage that concerns the icon, and by which authors?

Orthodox: Tell me, O you impudent man, which did he praise, or in which did he glory? In the cross, or in the representation of the cross? In the first, clearly; but the copy is not separated from the glory of the prototype, in the same way as shadow is not separated from light. And indeed, whatever is said about the cause, the same things can be said without exception of whatever is caused. In the former case, this will be said in the proper manner (*kyriōs*), because it is so by nature (*physei*); in the latter case, it will not be said in the proper manner (*kyriōs*), but rather by homonymy (*homōnymōs*). As Christ then had been announced from the beginning, talk about his image has followed accordingly (*schetikōs*); and you will find as many testimonies concerning Christ's image as you will find concerning Christ himself. In the same way concerning the type of the cross, you will find as many concerning the cross itself. Nowhere does scripture talk of type (*typos*) or image (*eikōn*), even if we allow that such terms mean the same thing. It is indeed utter silliness to look for such things, given that in the things that we see the effects share the power of the causes.[46] Is it not the case, after all, that every image is a kind of seal (*sphragis*) or

imprint (*ektypōsis*), bearing in itself the very same form (*eidos*) from which it has its name? Indeed, we call "cross" the impressed mark (*aposphragisma*), because it is the cross; there are not two crosses. And we call the image of Christ "Christ," because it is also Christ, and not two Christs—since it is impossible to distinguish one from the other in virtue of the name (*homōnymia*), but only in virtue of the nature (*physei*); so the blessed Basil says that the image of the king is also called king, and there are not two kings;[47] neither is power divided, nor is the glory apportioned; and the honor of the represented images goes over (*diabainei*) to the prototype.[48]

IX. *Heretic*: It so happens that in virtue of the multiplicity of images, there are many who are called "Lords" or "Christs"; hence comes polytheism; but we have only one Lord and God who is honored by us.

Orthodox: So what? Is not the Father Lord? Or the Son? Or the Spirit? Is each of them not God? Of course they are. And does this mean that there are three Gods and three Lords? That would be impiety. There is one who is God and Lord. The same things must be understood about the images, my friend; even if the representations are many in terms of number (*tō arythmō*), yet there is only one Christ, not many, in the same way as Christ is one and not different individuals (*diaphoroi*).[49] For, just as in the former case the simplicity of the appellation "God and Lord" is appropriate to the nature that does not tolerate to be divided, so in the latter case the use of the same name brings the various types into one species (*eidos*).[50] Hence, your silly objection appears to be inane.

X. *Heretic*: Let it be conceded that Christ can be represented, yet this should be according to the sacred words of divine origin (*hē theoparadotos hierologia*): "Do this in memory of me,"[51] he said, clearly indicating that he could not be represented in any other manner than by way of commemoration;[52] only in the act of commemoration what is represented is truly present, and the act of representing is holy.

Orthodox: For your refutation, it is sufficient to point out that you are clearly contradicting yourself, as you are conceding that Christ can be circumscribed, while earlier on you denied the very same thing. But since it would not be appropriate to leave any of your claims unchallenged (*anepitimēton*),[53] let us proceed to refute them one by one. What have you to say about these things that are reverently pronounced (*hierologēthenta*) and sung by the priests? Do you call them image, or truth? If you call them image, what nonsense! You go from blasphemy to blasphemy, like people who step into some sort of mud and fall down with both feet into something even more slippery as they try to go further. Indeed, you did not hesitate to incur the label of atheism to make sure your claims would be strengthened; and instead you call them truth—which indeed they are; indeed, the very body and blood of Christ are acknowledged in the reception on the part of the faithful, according to the words of divine origin—why then do you talk nonsense taking as types (*typoi*) the sacraments (*mystēria*) of truth?[54] "Do this in memory of me" is what the word says, and rightly so; indeed, this mystery is the recapitulation (*synkephalaiōsis*) of the whole economy,[55] signifying the whole by means of a synecdoche (*synekdochikōs*) through the most important part.[56] And the fact that he said "Do this in memory of me" is not said for everyone, but only for those who received the sacred orders. Yet at the same time, he did not forbid us to celebrate the other mysteries; we do indeed celebrate memorials of Christmas and of the Theophany;[57] at a certain time we carry branches to commemorate his sitting upon an ass; and at another time we kiss one another as a sign of the resurrection. I will forego to mention the ascent to the temple and the temptation of the tempter, in imitation of which we undergo the abstinence (*enkrateia*) of forty days, as well as other practices that have the same significance (*theōria*).[58] The Word should be understood to have meant, "Do *all* these things in memory of me," including them through a sort of reticence under the heading of the most important mystery. And then, should we not understand the same thing concerning his manifestation in bodily form (*sōmatoeidous autou thea*) on a writing implement, such as in the case of the divinely imprinted Gospels? Nowhere, indeed, did he say that the "pointed word" (*ton syntetmēmenon logon*)[59] should be written down; and notwithstanding that it was written down by the apostles [and it was preserved] until the present day; and what there is accomplished by means of paper and ink, here on the icon is accomplished by means of colors of all sorts or by means of some other material. So the great Basil says, "The art of painting silently shows by imitation those things that the words of the story narrate."[60] For this reason we are taught that we should depict whatever falls

under our perception by means of touch or of color, but also whatever we apprehend through reason (*dianoia*) by means of noetic contemplation (*theōria*). For this reason the custom has been handed down from antiquity not only to depict angels, but also to depict the future judgment, with those standing on the right or on the left having a sadder or more joyful countenance. There is only one thing that is utterly beyond circumscription, the Godhead, of which—so dictates its nature—there is no comprehensive concept or appropriate name; for this reason its circumscription is impossible. All the other things, however, that are defined through the comprehension of the mind, are circumscribed by hearing and by sight; their ratio is indeed identical.

XI. *Heretic*: What is it then that is shown? Is it the image of Christ or Christ? Certainly, it is not the two of them [together]. And how can one say that each is in the other, or that either one is in the other? The absurdity is manifest.

Orthodox: No one could go so mad as to assume that shadow and truth, nature and fiction (*thesis*), archetype and copy, cause and effect, will assume the same thing in terms of essence (*kat'ousian*), or as to say that each is in the other, or either one is in the other;[61] and this is what is implied when one presupposes or claims that Christ and his image are one in this respect (*kata touto*). Rather, according to nature (*kata physin*), Christ is one thing and his image is another, even as there is identity in virtue of the indivisibility of the appellation.[62] In fact, if you consider the nature (*physis*) of the image, you will say that you see neither Christ nor the image of Christ. It will be some sort of wood, or pigment, or gold, or silver, or some sort of different (*diaphorōn*) material from which it derives its name. And yet, when you consider the likeness to the original by means of a representation (*di'ektypōmatos*), you will see both Christ and the image of Christ. However, it will be Christ by virtue of homonymy (*kata to homōnymon*); it will be the image of Christ because of the relation (*kata to pros ti*). For the copy is a copy of the original, and so the name is the name of the one who is named. Here is the proof (*apodeixis*). Scripture says, "Josiah lifted his eyes toward the tomb of the man of God, who had spoken these words. He said: 'What is that protuberance (*skopelon*) that I see?' And the men of the city told him: 'It is the man of God who came from Judah.' And he said: 'Leave him. Let no man move his bones.'"[63] Do you get the

sense of the scriptures? He called the protuberance—in other words, the tomb—"the man of God," calling the building after the body lying within it. How much more, then, should the prototype be named after the image? And in the same way God said to Moses, "Make for me two golden Cherubim," not "images of Cherubim." Mark, then, how in virtue of the homonymy the copy is called after the archetype. and cease to engage in insanity, or to go against what we are saying using unreasonable arguments (*asyllogista*).

XII. *Heretic*: How can you possibly say the divinity of Christ is in the icon? According to the nature (*physikōs*)? So then is it the object of joint veneration (*symproskyneitai*)?[64] Or not? And if it is in the image, then we have circumscription; if it is not, then the veneration is impious, because what is worshiped is what the icon is not, and not what the icon is called. However, the flesh (*sarx*) of Christ is eternally the object of joint veneration with Christ,[65] because the two are united without any separation; this is not the case with the icon.

Orthodox: You are still lingering in the same absurdities. Given that the archetype and the icon are not one thing, given that one is the truth and the other a shadow, why do you think that your argument is so wise? Indeed, in the body of the Lord, in virtue of the connection (*synapheia*) of the natures,[66] the divinity is jointly honored and glorified in a shared manner (*synaptikōs*), even as it is subject to the circumscription of the flesh. How else could it be, given that it is subject to touch, and apprehension, and sight, and in no way, in virtue of the union, does it take over the unsuitable properties (*ta anoikeia*) of the nature that is not subject to comprehension?[67] Given that, as it is said, the flesh suffered even if the impassible nature (*ousia*) did not share in the suffering.[68] In the case of the image, however, everything is completely different. Where indeed the nature (*physis*) of the flesh that is raised up as an image is not even present, much more will you profess the uncircumscribable divinity,[69] or will you be inclined to accept that the divinity is present, and it is venerated in the image to the extent that it abides in the shadow of the flesh to which it is united. Where is there a place, then, where the divinity is not present—in beings endowed with reason, and beings without reason? Or in beings endowed with souls, and beings without a soul? Divinity indeed shall be present to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the kind of

natures (*physeōn*) that are actually receiving it. If anyone then will say that the divinity is present in the icon, he will not deviate from the truth; indeed, it is also present in the representation of the cross and in all other divine implements (*anathēmata*);[70] yet not by means of a natural union (*physikē enōsei*)[71]—indeed, they are not the flesh that is deified—but by virtue of a relational participation (*schetikē metalēpsei*), where the participation happens in terms of grace and honor.

XIII. *Heretic*: What does it mean, when they say, "It is not a good thing that the image should be displayed, and not venerated"? It is, in fact, much more advantageous; on the one hand, because this forces us to return to the things in question and to commemorate them in a way that is equal to hearing; on the other hand, because it induces us to flee from the lowliness (*to chamerpes*) of material depiction.[72] Scripture says, "The Spirit is God, and those who worship him must do so in spirit and in truth."[73]

Orthodox: If you concede that the capacity of the sense of sight and of the sense of hearing are equal, which is indeed the case, do show that you believe this; let the sacred book of the Gospel, despite the fact it should be worshiped, remain solely for hearing, and let it not be an object of veneration. But if this is folly, why should the other suggestion not be foolish too? Indeed, by you they are decreed to be equal. Why then do you not view both as venerable, but instead you claim that each conflicts with itself in giving both help and harm? So it appears that God is venerated in spirit and in truth in the image, and in the Gospel, and in the cross, and in any other consecrated object, as the materials have been subjugated by the elevation of the mind (*nous*) toward God. Nor does the mind rest in them, since it has not given them trust—this was the mistake of those who venerate idols; through them, in fact, the mind ascends to the prototypes, in line with the faith of those who are Orthodox (*tōn Orthodoxōn*).

XIV. *Heretic*: Is the letter[74] to be venerated or the icon of which it is the name? Is it only one of them? Not two? In what manner?

Orthodox: This is like asking: should one venerate the Gospel, or the name inscribed on it? The image of the cross, or the inscription on it? And I will add, as far as human beings are concerned, the individual,

or the name? The same would go for Peter, and for Paul, and for each of the individuals of the same species. How is it possible not to say that this will be foolish (*anoēton*), if not ridiculous? Among the things that we see with our eyes, which one is there that does not have a name? And in what way can what has a name be distinguished from the glory of its own appellation, so that we can offer veneration to the one and withhold it from the other? These things indeed are relations (*pros ti*). Every name is indeed the appellation of something that is named and a sort of natural image of the thing of which it is said; in these things the unity of adoration is not divided.

XV. *Heretic*: Should the cross be venerated more than the icon? More, or less?

Orthodox: Given that there is a natural order in reality, you seem to me to be beating around the bush (*perittologein*). If by cross you mean the archetype, why not? On it the impassible Word suffered (*epenthen ho apathēs Logos*), and it is invested with such power that with the shadow it burns the demonic host and similarly drives it away from those that are thereby signed.[75] If instead you mean the representation, the question makes no sense (*ou syneton*). The honor that is ascribed to the effects is greater, the more the causes distinguish themselves, and whatever is received for the sake of something else is lower in honor than that for whose sake it is received; the same goes for the cross of Christ, which earlier on was an instrument of condemnation and later on is sanctified, being taken over for the purpose of the divine passion.

XVI. *Heretic*: There is no distinction (*diaphoron*) between idol and icon; indeed, they are identical in appellation. One comes from the term *eidos* ("form") in its general meaning—indeed, its chief significance is not "what is seen" (*to horōmenon*); the other comes from the term *eoikos* ("alike"), in its connotation of "likeness." Indeed, a likeness is merely what is not its prototype; in this the idol and the icon do not differ. In both cases, the term refers to the same. But to venerate an idol, thereby claiming to venerate Christ by means of circumscription, is an act of impiety. This is utterly forbidden by the word of truth.

Orthodox: From this claim (*ennoia*)—I mean, that the likenesses are not the divine, and that they illicitly usurp the truth in themselves—

there is no difference [between the idol and the icon]; because by the divine scripture it is equally forbidden not only to set up idols, but also inscriptions and simulacra, and so on. For scripture says, "You shall not make for yourselves any idols made by human hands (*cheiropoiēta*) or sculptures, nor shall you set up inscriptions; nor will you set up a prominent stone in your land so as to worship it; because I am the Lord your God."[76] And, in another passage, "Has not the workman made an image, or the goldsmith having melted gold coated the image in it, and turned it into a likeness (*omoiōma*)?" Indeed, the danger (*to epikyndynon*) of idolatry comes from both. Therefore, since from antiquity the term *phonē* ("icon") has been forbidden to us by God for a similitude that concerns his infinite nature (*kata physin apeiron*), therefore we cannot use it, and the same goes for similar terms (*ta systoicha*).[77] We should rather use the term *icon* to refer to the bodily form of Christ, as this was indicated at the beginning during the creation of the universe at the formation (*diaplasin*) of man. "Let us make man," scripture says, "according to our image and likeness (*kat'eikona hēmeteran kai homoiōsin*)";[78] and again, at the divine interrogation, "Whose image (*eikōn*) is this?";[79] because from these passages (*enteuthen*) we see [the legitimacy of] a transposed use (*paralēpsis*), by virtue of a catachresis of the terms *form* (*charaktēr*) and *likeness* (*homoiōma*), but nowhere of the term *idol*,[80] even if it carries the same connotation. The term *idol* is then applied solely to the ancient worshipers of creation (*ktismatolatrai*) and to any such as there might be nowadays, by whom the Trinity, which is undivided in nature and glory and power, is not worshiped, nor is the enfleshment (*sarkōsis*) of the Word acknowledged. The gods, however, who did not make the heavens and the earth, but were made of wood and of stone and of all sorts of other materials, and are divided among themselves not only in terms of nature but also in terms of will, glory, and worship, let them perish, as scripture says. And then they will bring out to us, as one brings out freed captives, the icons of Our Lady (*hē Despoinikē*) and of the whole host of saints.

XVII. *Heretic*: Some even claim that it is not appropriate to represent (*historeisthai*) and to venerate [the saints].[81] And why do they say that? Because it does not constitute honor to those who have entered the celestial glory to represent them using material images. Let us rather

erect memorials through speech, which is more valuable than that in pigments, because it is more useful.

Orthodox: They also say the same thing about Christ, and the refutation (*ho elegchos*) is evident, lest we repeat ourselves. Hearing is indeed equal to sight, and it is impossible to prevent the two from being one. If you were to take away the one, you would then also have to take away the other completely; and if we are not mistaken, we would then have to eliminate wholly and completely the veneration of anyone who is venerated.

XVIII. *Heretic*: But not everyone who is portrayed in an image is worthy of being venerated; there are indeed many of them (*ho deina gar kai ho deina*), and it may happen that one is unimportant and not worthy of veneration.

Orthodox: In this case, however, we have some who are worthy of veneration and glory, because they have earned honor by way of the blood of martyrdom or a worthy life.

XIX. *Heretic*: From this it would then follow that veneration is of many types (*polyschidēs*). Yet, there is only one kind of veneration, not many.

Orthodox: Worship (*hē latreutikē*) is only of one type, and it belongs to God alone; to others belong, however, different types of honor. Kings and rulers are, for instance, the object of veneration among us, the masters among the slaves, the fathers among the children, but they are not worshiped as gods; even if the veneration is one in appearance, it differs according to the intention (*dia tēs dianoēseōs*), and this is because they are human beings, and they receive veneration in line with the honor that is due to them, whether by law, or by fear, or by persuasion. If, then, a person is cognizant of the difference (*diaphora*) in veneration, by means of which through the images the prototypes are venerated, he then has offered the veneration that is properly so called and that is properly offered to God alone; but to the other images, veneration is offered by analogy, to the Mother of God as to the Mother of God, and to the saints as to the saints.

There are sacred books that are put on public displays in all the churches of God to the eyes of all human beings, in the same way as

their content is there for all to hear; they are venerated in the same manner, because they are invested with the same power; or perhaps those that are seen are more excellent in veneration because of the worthier quality of the perception. And in any case, what shall we do with the custom established from the beginning until the present day, as can be seen from all temples of God and all other liturgical tools? Did the choir of the confessor worship in an impious manner? Did the undefiled church engage in idolatrous activity? And when will the church be purified by the removal of the idols, and by whom?[82] Clearly this opposition is from the antichrist. And how will the paradigm of ancient customs and traditions that has been handed down from of old be overturned? Even if in this case the warning is unnecessary, the inspired fathers encourage us to stand firm even against a logical demonstration; indeed, they say: the simplicity of faith is stronger than sophisticated arguments. And elsewhere: Let the ancient customs be preserved. Indeed, you mindless one, having miscalled the church of God idolatrous because of the erection of the images, can't you see that you are bringing to completion the work of all the heresies? Stand back together with the opposing faction; listening to the voice that—so to speak—lapidates you, do not touch the mountain of the church, as a heretical beast.[83]

XX. If, then, anyone does not acknowledge that our Lord Jesus Christ—who has come in the flesh—is circumscribed in the flesh, even as the divine nature (*physis*) remains uncircumscribed, he is a heretic.[84]

If anyone argues that, because of the circumscription of the flesh of the Word, the divinity is co-circumscribed in a similar manner, failing to distinguish either nature in the one hypostasis according to the natural property—because neither absorbs (*anairountos*) the other in the undivided union—he is a heretic.

If anyone calls the circumscription of the bodily form of the Word neither the image of Christ nor Christ by homonymy (*homōnymōs*), but calls it an idol of deceit, he is a heretic.

If anyone dares to declare the relative (*schetikēn*) veneration of Christ in the image the veneration of idols and not of Christ himself, despite the fact that the great Basil claims that the glory of the prototype does not differ from that ascribed to the image,[85] he is a heretic.

If anyone says that the mere exposition of the image of Christ is

sufficient, without honoring or dishonoring the image, thereby rejecting the veneration that is relative by honor, he is a heretic.

If anyone were to take over the scriptural injunctions against the idols, and were to apply them to the sacred image of Christ, hence calling the church of Christ an idolatrous shrine, he is a heretic.

If anyone were to say that, venerating the icon of Christ, he is venerating the divinity that is naturally (*physikōs*) in the image, when in fact [the icon] is the shadow of the flesh that is united to the divinity (and this is the case even if the Godhead is everywhere), he is a heretic.

If anyone were to compare to lowly devises the raising of the mind (*anagōgē*) to the prototypes by means of the holy icons, as if one were lifted without them by means of the sense of hearing to the contemplation (*autopsia*) of the prototypes, and were not to ascribe the same honor to the narration by means of words that are ascribed to the graphic depiction through silence (as the great Basil says),[86] he is a heretic.

If anyone does not agree that the image of Christ, no less than the symbol (*typos*) of the cross, should be everywhere represented and put on display for the salvation of the people of God, he is a heretic.

If anyone does not offer the adequate adoration to the image of the Mother of God and of all the saints, to the Mother of God as it is appropriate for her and to the saints as it is appropriate for them, respecting the difference (*to diaphoron*) in veneration between the Mother of God and her fellow servants (*homodouloi*), but were to call the salvific ornament of the church an idolatrous device (*epinoia*), he is anathema.

If anyone should not number among the other heresies the one that, in an insane manner, opposes the veneration of the blessed images, and that separates [the faithful] from God in the same manner as the others, but were actually to say that sharing the sacraments with these people is not unacceptable (*adiaphoron*), he is a heretic.

If anyone were to exaggerate (*hyperteinōn*) the honor that is due to the icon and were to say that he would not walk up to it, given that it would not benefit him until he is purified of all sin, he is a heretic.

SECOND REFUTATION OF THE ICONOCLASTS

As the word of truth (*tēs alētheias logos*) is undifferentiated (*monoeidēs*) and unshakeable in nature (*tēn physin*), it does not happen to be subject to differences of opinion (*gnōmikais diaresesin*)[1] or temporal modifications; indeed, it is always glorifying and asserting the same things, given that it is beyond the reach of any subtraction or addition. The myth of falsity (*tou pseudous mythos*), as it happens to be fragmented and characterized by a multiplicity of opinions (*myriognōmos*), constantly moving about from one thing to another, honors one thing at a moment and affirms the opposite at the next, and it never remains fixed at any point at all, being cast about by the passions of transformation and change. This is what happens with the howling of the iconoclasts; at a moment, they call the icon of our Lord Jesus Christ an idol of deceitful blasphemy; at another moment, they do not say so but claim that the depiction (*hē historia*)[2] is a good thing when its purpose is reflection on scripture (*exēgēsis*) and commemoration (*anamnēsis*), but it is not a good thing when its purpose is veneration; and for this reason they ascribe to it an elevated position, fearing that if it were placed in the lower places, providing an occasion for veneration, it would become a cause of idolatry to the same. Who would not be amazed at the lack of wisdom of those who fail to understand that the very fact that they are afraid of the lower position and of veneration is an indication of their obsession with idolatry (*eidōlikē emphasis*)?[3] And the mere removal of the lower icons will be insufficient for their mistaken opinion, if one were to leave the images that are above. After all, it is written in the Books of the Kings that no one pleased God except David, Hezekiah, and Josiah, who removed both the lower and the upper idols.[4] So if they sought to please God perfectly as much as it was in their power, or rather to commit perfect acts of impiety out of their

misguided opinion, there would be no sacred buildings under the heaven that they would not despoil, and there would be no sacred items in them depicting the life of Christ and the saints[5] that they would not commit to the flames. However, enough has been said by me about these people, having tried as much as it is in my power with my limited intelligence (*tē oligonoia*) to oppose their absurd (*alogous*) claims and arguments. Now, having been forced to it by the evidence (*tois elenchois*), they are ready to acknowledge that Our Lord Jesus Christ can be portrayed, but they deny that one should venerate the image erected in his honor; then they seek to disturb the mind of the uneducated masses, claiming that in this act of veneration they worship the creation instead of the Creator. With the help of God then, even this present inadequate (*penichros*) treatise will deal with the same issue, so that through the opposition of two people, namely, an orthodox person and an iconoclast, the weight of their reciprocal arguments may be easier to grasp and to assess.

I. *Orthodox*:[6] Do you agree that, as the Son and the Word of God has become flesh, he is circumscribed by the flesh, yet he remains uncircumscribable as far as the nature of the divinity is concerned?

Heretic: I agree, and how could I do otherwise? Indeed our fathers, who truly were theologians, say so, with Gregory saying, "Circumscribed in body, uncircumscribed in spirit,"[7] and with Athanasios saying, "On the one hand, Christ was intellectually acknowledged as God and truly was such in an invisible manner; on the other hand, he was visibly touched as a human being (*anthrōpos*)[8] and truly in his manner he existed."[9]

II. *Orthodox*: Do you then object to recognize at the same time that this circumscription, namely, the image of Christ, should be acknowledged as worthy of veneration?

Heretic: Absolutely! None of the blessed fathers has said that. But I am going to ask you a question in return, and please respond to me. Where is it written in the Old or the New Testament that one should venerate an image?

III. *Orthodox*: Wherever it is written that we should venerate its prototype.

Heretic: "You will venerate the Lord your God, and you will worship him alone."[10] Thus it is written; we are not told to worship a prototype, or an image, as you say.

IV. *Orthodox*: The topic under discussion, most excellent man, is not theology; rather, it is the economy, where one can see the prototype and the image, if you acknowledge that Christ, having assumed flesh, has become like us.[11]

Heretic: But given that scripture says, "You shall venerate the Lord your God, and him only you shall worship," does not this passage command us to offer veneration to the Father and to the Son?[12]

V. *Orthodox*: Of course, but this law was not given to the men of old (*tois palai*) when God had not yet become incarnate; indeed, "no one has ever seen God," as the scripture says;[13] indeed, after he became flesh and entered circumscription, he who was not circumscribed could be seen, and he who could not be touched or seen became corporeally subject to sight and touch. And he is worshiped together with the Father, as someone who is equally God with him; he is also venerated in his own proper image, of which he is the prototype, having become man (*anthrōpos*) like us in all things except sin.

Heretic: In all the divinely inspired scripture, it is said most clearly of Christ that he is worthy of veneration; indeed, it is written, "Let all the angels of God venerate him."[14] Of prototype and image, however, we find no mention at all.

VI. *Orthodox*: When about Christ it is written, "Let all the angels of God venerate him," what else should be understood, but that the passage refers to the prototype? Indeed, he became man after being God (*meta tou einai Theos*),[15] in the same way as each human being is the prototype of his own image, and there cannot be a man for whom his own portrait would not be an image; in the same way, then, Christ, having become like us in all things, is the prototype of his own image, even if this is not written in these very terms (*tē lexei*). So, then, when you ask, where is it written that the icon of Christ should be venerated, then you should also hear the answer, which is, "Wherever it is written

that Christ should be venerated," given that the copy is inseparable from the prototype.

Heretic: But given that it is not written that Christ is the prototype of his own image, this claim does not have to be accepted (*aparadektos*); indeed, it has not been included in our profession (*homologia*) of faith.[16]

VII. *Orthodox*: Many things that are not written explicitly (*lexesin autais*) have the same weight as the things that are written and have been announced by the holy fathers.[17] Indeed, the fact that the Son is consubstantial (*homoousios*) to the Father is not to be found in the divinely inspired scriptures but has been made clear by the fathers at a later stage; the same goes for the fact that the Holy Spirit is God, or that the Mother of the Lord is also the Mother of God, or many other doctrines that would be difficult to list; if these are not confessed, our truthful worship (*hē alēthinē latreia ēmōn*) is denied. These doctrines were confessed when the need arose to oppose the heresies that were rising up. Why, then, even if it is not written that Christ is the prototype of his own image, should it be at all surprising that now, as the timely moment has come, this claim should be made, in order to oppose the growing iconoclast heresy, as the truth now shines most clearly?

Heretic: While it is the case that Christ is both God and man, he is not a mere man, as if he were one of us; therefore, clearly, it is impious to claim that he is the prototype of his own image.[18]

VIII. *Orthodox*: When the fathers claimed that Christ is not a mere man, they did not do so to deny his circumscribability, but they intended to affirm that he subsisted simultaneously as both God and man—something that cannot be said of any one of us. In that respect, then, we can all be said to be mere human beings. Given, then, that he is circumscribed, he is the prototype of his own image; this is so as if he were one of us, and yet he is not for this reason a mere man.

Heretic: I can then accept that Christ is circumscribed, but not that he can be called prototype.[19]

IX. *Orthodox*: How could he be circumscribed without also being a prototype? Indeed, that which we call circumscribed is also what we

call prototype. What can be circumscribed can also be taken as model for the image that is drawn.[20] If, then, you acknowledge that Christ can be circumscribed, you must then concede, whether you like it or not, that he subsists as the prototype of his own image, in the same way as you must accept that every human being is the prototype of his own representation (*indalma*). It is in this sense that the divine Basil says, "Let Christ, who is the presider over the struggles, be portrayed in the painting."[21] By saying that, he has firmly demonstrated that Christ is the prototype of his own icon; if, indeed, anyone who is depicted [lit. "written"] in a painting is modeled after the form of the prototype.

Heretic: What commonality of veneration is there between the prototype and the copy?

X. *Orthodox*: The same commonality that exists between the life-giving (*zōoporos*) cross and its own image.

Heretic: Where has this notion been taken from? I shall not accept you as a newly established dispenser of laws.

XI. *Orthodox*: From two who speak the dogma in a divine manner,[22] such as Denys the Aeropagite, who says, "What belongs to the truth is in the similitude, and what belongs to the archetype is in the image; indeed, each is in the other with the only difference of the essence (*para to tēs ousias diaphoron*)";[23] and the great Basil, who observes, "It is not the case that he, who in the public square looks at the portrait of the emperor, and calls the one in the image 'emperor,' thereby acknowledges two emperors, the portrait and the one whose portrait it is; nor, if, pointing at the one drawn in the portrait, he were to say 'This is the emperor,' he would not deprive the prototype of the denomination of emperor; rather, by his acknowledgment of this fact,[24] he further confirms the honor of the emperor. Indeed, if truly the portrait is the emperor, all the more it is obvious that the emperor should be the one who provides cause for the image."[25] And elsewhere Basil says, "In general, every image that is artificially created, taking after the prototype, has taken the likeness into matter, and participates in its character by means of the insight of the artist, and the impression of the hand; the same goes for the painter; and so it is that the sculptor, or the one who makes images out of gold or bronze,

takes matter, considers the prototype, takes over the type of what has been observed, and presses it into the material as if it were a seal."[26]

Heretic: Yet, even if the fathers have said this, they have not said at all that the veneration for both should be identical.

XII. *Orthodox*: Given that the blessed Basil says that clearly the honor (*timē*) of the prototype should be ascribed in equal measure to the image, what else do you think this means, apart from the fact that the honor and the veneration that is due to both is the same?

Heretic: I agree as far as the honor is concerned, but not as far as the veneration; it is you, and not Basil, that uses this term interchangeably.[27]

XIII. *Orthodox*: You should then listen to what the blessed Athanasios says: "Indeed, on the one hand, in the image of the emperor, one can behold both the species (*to eidos*) and the form (*hē morphē*); and on the other hand, in the emperor, one can see the species of the image; so that the likeness of the king is expressed in the image without any discrepancy; so that, whoever sees the image, may see in it the king; and equally, whoever sees the king may acknowledge that he is the same as the one who is represented in the image. Moreover, given that in the two there is no difference at all, if anyone after having seen the image wishes to see the king, the image could then say: 'I and the king are one thing; in fact, I am in him and he is in me; and what you discern in me, you can discern the same thing in him; and what you will see in him, you will see also in me.' And he, then, who venerates the image, he also venerates the same king in it, given that the image is nothing except the very species and form of the king."[28] Therefore, if I may add anything of my own, whoever venerates the image (*typos*) of the cross venerates the true life-giving cross. The image is indeed the species (*idea*) and the description (*diagraphē*) of the latter.

Heretic: Cease then to talk about the cross here; the cross, indeed, is the unparalleled weapon (*tropaion*) against the devil.

XIV. *Orthodox*: You, then, should stop talking about the image of Christ. He is indeed the Savior of the world, through whom the cross,

while before it was an instrument of punishment, has become a symbol of immortality, in virtue of the fact that he was crucified on it.[29]

Heretic: But this in no way brings it about, that the image of Christ should participate in his own veneration or that the image should also bear the name "Christ."

XV. *Orthodox*: And so, then, accept a parallel claim on my part: this in no way brings it about, that the image of the life-giving cross should participate in its own veneration or that it should bear the same name with the life-giving wood.

Heretic: Stop with these silly remarks (*tēs lērōdias*)! The veneration of the two is one, and it is shared; the image of the life-giving wood is called with the same name that is used for the reality. The cross, then, is both.

XVI. *Orthodox*: If you win, I will win too, because I will say the same. The adoration of Christ and the adoration of his figure (*ektypōma*) are one and the same, and the representation of Christ is called with the same name that is used for Christ himself. Christ, indeed, is both; in what manner this may be so is proved by the teachings of the blessed fathers quoted above. In the same way, all the things that are said of the prototype are necessarily also said of the copy, but in the case of the prototype, such things are said synonymously (*synōnymōs*), as they are present in an eminent manner (*kyriōs*); in the case of the image, on the contrary, they are said homonymously (*homōnymōs*), as they are not present in an eminent manner (*ou kyriōs*).

Heretic: What do you mean by that? I do not fully understand this.

XVII. *Orthodox*: I mean that the name "cross" is said of that on which Christ is lifted up, in virtue of the signification of the term, and in virtue of the nature (*tē physei*) of the life-giving wood. The imprint (*ektypōma*), on the contrary, is called "cross" in virtue of the signification of the term, and not in virtue of the nature of the life-giving wood, given that it is made of some sort of wood, or of gold, or of silver, or of stone, or of some other material designation (*diagraphē*). And it shares in the name of the prototype, in the same way as it

shares in the honor and in the veneration; it is, however, distinct from the nature. Therefore, by whatever names the life-giving cross is called, by the same names the image is also called. If we call the cross "the pride of the inhabited world," in the same way its representation should be called "the pride of the inhabited world." And if we call the cross "light" and "life," similarly its representation is called "light" and "life." If we call it "torch of demons," similarly its representation is called "torch of demons." And so every name that is used for the prototype, by that name the image should also be called. This theoretical notion (*thεōrēma*) also applies to Christ and to his image. Christ is indeed called God and man both because of the significance of the terms, and because of the nature of the divinity and of the humanity. His image, however, is called Christ because of the significance of the term, but not because of the nature of the divinity and the humanity. In terms of its manufacture, in fact, it is painted in various colors, or it is assembled with a variety of stones, or it is created from the artistry of the sculptor, or from gold, or from silver, or from some other configuration of materials. And it shares the name [of the prototype] as well as the honor and the veneration; however, it is distinct in terms of the nature. So every name that is used for Jesus Christ, so by that name his image should also be called. If we call Christ "the Lord of glory," then also his image should be called "Lord of glory."[30] If we then said that Christ is the power (*dynamis*) of God and the wisdom (*sophia*) of God, then in the same way his image should be called the power and the wisdom of God.[31] And if we said that Christ is the Son of man, then similarly his image is also called the Son of man. And in the same way, as the divine Word says, "I am the Light of the World," so the image can also be called by this inscription (*epigraphē*).[32] And so, when Christ says, "To me every knee shall bow, in the heavens, and on the earth, and under the earth," the image may also say this by its inscription.[33] And when Christ says, "I am the life and the resurrection,"[34] then the image may say this by the inscription. And by those names by which the divinely inspired scripture calls Christ, we must be able to call his image also.

Heretic: There is a lot of emphasis on identity [in what you say], and you almost seem to suggest that the copy is nothing but the prototype itself. For how did every knee bow, or how could every knee bow, in the heavens and on earth and under earth, to the icon of Christ?

XVIII. *Orthodox*: You should have listened to what is said by Athanasios, who fought many fights (*polyathlos*): "In the image of emperor, there is the appearance (*eidos*) and the form (*morphē*) of the emperor, and in the emperor there is the appearance of the image. And again, in theory the image could say the following: 'I and the emperor are one. Indeed, I am in him and he is in me, and what you discern in me, you will also discern in him, and what you will see in him, you will also see in me.' He, then, who venerates the image venerates the emperor in it, because the image itself is nothing else but the appearance and the form of the emperor."[35] In the *Thesauros*, then, St. Cyril says, "In the same way, if someone were to see a beautifully painted image and were full of wonder at the representation of the emperor, and if he had also the possibility to see these same things in the painting, which are manifest in him, he would also conceive the ardent desire to see the emperor for himself.[36] The painting could then rightly say to him: 'He who has seen me has seen the emperor.' And again, 'I and the emperor are one thing, as far as likeness and most exact representation are concerned.' And further, 'I am in the emperor and the emperor is in me, according to the imprint of the form (*kata tēs morphēs schēma*).' For the painting fully carries his appearance, and the appearance of the image is preserved in him."[37] [If you had listened to this], you would have understood that when Christ is venerated, his image is also venerated, because it is in Christ, and when his image is venerated, Christ is also venerated; indeed, he is venerated in it. And since now, incontrovertibly (*homologoumenōs*), every knee that is in the heavens, and on the earth, and under the earth bows down to Christ, in the same way, incontrovertibly, it is clear that every knee that is in the heavens, and on the earth, and under the earth should bow down to his image, as it is in Christ. So what is said applies only to the name, and to the identity of veneration, not to the material (*tēs hylēs*);[38] the latter cannot at all participate in the veneration, even if he who is depicted appears in it to be venerated.

To confirm most firmly what has been said, it is best to support our claims with the testimony of the fathers. The holy Sophronios, in his *Miracles of the Martyrs Cyros and John*, says the following: "Thus, when we entered a certain temple that had been completed, splendid and most beautiful to behold, touching the altitude of the very heavens, and having gone inside, we saw a huge and most beautiful icon,[39] having in the middle Christ the Lord (*ton Despotēn*)[40] painted [lit. "written"] in colors; the Mother of Christ, our Lady, the Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary, on the left; on the right instead, John, the Baptizer of the Lord and the Forerunner, who venerated him from the womb with his jumps, given that he could not be heard as he was speaking being inside. And beneath there were some of the choir of the apostles and of the prophets, and of the throng (*homēgyris*) of the martyrs. And with these there happened to be also the martyrs Cyril and John themselves; and standing in front of the icon they prostrated themselves before the Lord, bending their knees, and bringing their heads to the floor, begging for the healing of the youth." And shortly afterward, he says: "Standing not far from the icon, and coming closer, they said: 'Do you see how the Lord does not wish to grant you healing?'" And after a while, he says: "And coming to the icon for the third time, they used the words which they had used before; and after praying for a long while, they accomplished what they had been enjoined to do, and burst out: 'Christ has had pity (*splagchistheis*)[41] and has assented, as he is full of mercy, and has said "Minister to him before the icon."'"[42] Do you see, then, that the martyrs prostrated themselves in front of the icon, as if they were venerating Christ himself? And from the icon came out a voice as out of Christ himself, agreeing to their request; so then, what is venerated by the martyrs, it is clear that it may also be venerated by the angels.[43]

Heretic: What has been recounted is a vision (*theōria*), even if it is told by a saint, and as such it does not have the authority of a dogmatic claim.

XIX. *Orthodox*: That it is a vision, I do not deny; yet, if it were not true, it would not have been recorded by the saint. And the dogmatic claim has just been demonstrated; the vision has been brought in here by us by way of example (*paradeigmatikōs*). Examples are said to be the eyes of what is said, and indeed they are. Indeed, to this point the blessed Athanasios says something even more paradoxical: the copy shares so much with the prototype that the suffering (*to pathos*) of the icon of Christ appears to be the suffering of Christ himself, so to speak: "Lo, raise the eyes of your reason (*dianoia*), and behold this new sight. Once upon a time, having taken down the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, some Jews said: 'In the same way as once in the past our ancestors mocked him, let us also mock him in the same way.' Then those that

had assembled there began to spit on the face of the icon of Christ, and hit it on the face on one side and on the other, saying: 'Whatever our fathers did to him, let us also do to his image.' And they go on saying: 'Since they mocked him, let us do the same as well.' And with boundless wantonness they mocked him; and what they actually said we do not dare to refer. And then they say: 'We have heard that they nailed his hands and feet; let us also do that to him.' Thus they transfixed the hands and feet of the icon of Christ with nails. And then they said in their insanity: 'We have heard that they gave him to drink vinegar and gall with a sponge. Let us do the same.' And they did so, pressing the sponge full with vinegar against the mouth of the image of the Lord. And then they said: 'We have been taught that our fathers struck his head with a reed; so let us do the same.' And taking a reed they hit the image of the Lord. Finally they said: 'As we learn with accuracy that they pierced his side with a spear, let us omit nothing, but let us add this too.' And after asking that a spear be brought, they made one of their number raise the spear and pierce it through the side of the icon of Christ. And when this was being done, lo, a great quantity of blood and water flew from it."[44] Do you see the power of the things that have been said? And I refrain from mentioning the healings from the outpouring of the side that benefited many.

Heretic: The miracle was seen by Jews; miracles are for unbelievers, not for those who believe.

XX. *Orthodox*: Of course I agree. But the point is that, even if nowadays such signs do not happen, the copy shares most fully in the same veneration as the prototype; and in reverse, the prototype shares the same veneration as the copy; and the veneration for both of them is one and the same, as it was said in the case of the life-giving cross and its representation. The recognition (*homologia*)[45] of the representation is also the recognition of the life-giving cross; and the same goes for the negation of the life-giving cross. The same will then be the case for the image of Christ and for Christ himself.

Heretic: This is all very well and sufficient for the holy cross and its representation, but not for Christ and his depiction. Indeed, your example is not appropriate; the icon should be compared to the icon, and the representation to the representation.

XXI. *Orthodox*: The accuracy of what has been said until now, Sir, is sufficient for the expression of agreement. Nonetheless, do accept from me a small question. Which is greater or more honorable, Christ or the cross?

Heretic: The former, obviously; it is indeed in Christ that the cross is sanctified.

XXII. *Orthodox*: Is, then, Christ's icon greater and more honorable than the representation of the cross?

Heretic: There is no doubt, even for those who have little skill in the art of syllogism, that the copies are distinguished according to the difference (*tēn diaphoran*) of the prototypes, given that the icon of Christ is more eminent than the symbol of the cross.

XXIII. *Orthodox*: If that which is inferior and lesser in honor is properly considered, only a foolish person would claim that that which is superior and greater in honor is not properly considered. For what closer comparison is there to the icon of Christ than the symbol (*typos*) of the cross, when the former and the latter bear the same relation [to the prototype]? Indeed, by way of a catachresis,[46] we even call the representation of the life-giving cross "icon"; and we talk of the representation of Christ when we mean his own icon; according to etymology, indeed, *icon* comes from *eoikos*, and *eoikos* means similar; the similarity is discerned (*nenoētai*),[47] and named, and beheld, both in the icon and in the representation of the cross.

Heretic: I can agree with this too; all the same, you must compare the icon with the icon and the representation with the representation, even if you think that the first and the second have equal worth (*isodynamein*).[48]

XXIV. *Orthodox*: If you have paid attention, [you will realize that] this has already been demonstrated earlier quite clearly from the writings of the holy fathers. If you have not, let us then listen to the words of St. Basil, who illumines our minds (*tas phrenas*): "The term 'emperor' is also used for the image of the emperor; but there are not two emperors; the power is not divided, and the glory is not apportioned.

In the same way as the principle (*archē*) and power (*exousia*) that rules over us is one, so also our glorification (*doxologia*) is one and not many. For this reason the honor of the icon ascends to the prototype."[49] What argument can deny that this example also applies to the image of Christ? In the same way, then, it must be said that even the icon of Christ is to be called Christ, and there are not two Christs; nor in this case is the power divided, nor the glory apportioned, and similarly the honor of the image ascends to the prototype.

Heretic: Actually, it was not correct on the part of the saint to compare the image of the emperor to the icon of Christ, but rather, [he should have applied it] to Christ the invisible (*aoratos*) image of God the Father.[50]

XXV. *Orthodox*: So this is what you find remarkable (*to thaumaston*)—that the artificial (*technētē*) image has been used by the saint to demonstrate the unparalleled identity of the Father and of the Son, but that this artificial image has been used by us not for the natural [image of the Father] but for the artificial icon of Christ. In the former instance, the artificial image is compared to the natural image; in the latter, the artificial image is compared to the artificial image. What a difference, and what a huge one! But given that the saint could not find any better example, he used that of the emperor. How much more can the image of any emperor be appropriately applied to the image of Christ the true emperor! [The image of the earthly emperor] approaches the image of Christ more closely, the more it is preeminent in the honor received by his subjects.[51] Indeed, even he who rules over the earth carries the image of Christ according to the title of dignity (*axia*). Scripture says indeed, "Power (*kratēsis*) was given to you (*hymin*) by the Lord, and dominion by the Most High; he will examine your works, and search your wills, because you were subject to his kingdom, and you did not judge correctly."[52]

Heretic: Even if the divine Basil said that the honor given to the image goes over to the prototype, he did not mean the artificial image, but rather the natural one, hence of the Son in relation to the Father; and he was right in saying so.

XXVI. *Orthodox*: Stop, my friend; he did not say, "The image of the invisible Father is also said to be God, and there are not two gods"—which

is true—but to buttress the theological doctrine, he used the example of the emperor, saying that even the image of the emperor is said to be the emperor, and there are not two emperors; the conclusion (*symperasma*) is entailed by consequence.[53] For this reason when he says that the honor of the image goes over to the prototype, he adds, "What the image is here by imitation (*mymetikōs*), Christ is there by nature (*physikōs*)";[54] so in this way the relationship of the emperor to his own image has been taken as a prototype,[55] and not that of the Father toward the Son, or indeed he could have said the opposite. "In fact, what the Son is here by nature, the image is there by imitation." Moreover, the prototype and the copy appear to be things that belong to this world (*tōn kathēmas einai*), which can also be applied to Christ and to his icon. For we affirm that Christ has become a man in this world, even if he is also God. So it is possible to say in general about any emperor at all, "The honor given to the image goes over to the prototype."

Heretic: But honor is not at all understood by the saints as veneration; indeed, one thing is honor, and one thing is veneration.

XXVII. *Orthodox*: How will you admit that the power is not divided, and the glory is not fragmented, between the prototype and the example, when you do not understand that they are subject to the one and the same veneration? The power and the glory are indeed inseparable and undivided from the honor and the veneration; the things said are different because different terms are used (*tē heterolexia*), but they have the same power in terms of dignity (*tē axiōmati*).

Heretic: He said that the honor goes over but not the veneration. Even I, of course, honor the image of Christ, when it is placed in a high place, but I certainly do not venerate it, as I said.[56]

XXVIII. *Orthodox*: Before we discuss anything else (*prōton*), I have a question: Where do you get the idea that it is legitimate to honor the image of Christ when it is placed in a high place? Basil does not mention this but simply talks of honor without further qualifications. So your claim has already collapsed. In addition, how can anything be honored, whether placed in a higher or in a lower position, without also being venerated? In fact, we honor and we venerate the representation of the life-giving cross, whenever it is displayed in a high

place or is seen in a low place. Similarly, even in the earthly sphere, we honor the emperor when he is sitting at a high place or he is seen in a lower place, and the same goes for the military leader, the prefect, the master, or the teacher. But let us transfer this claim (*to theōrēma*) to the divine scriptures. What do you think it means, when it says, "Worthy are you, Lord, our most holy God, to receive (*labein*) the glory and the honor and the power,"[57] and further, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing"?[58] And again, "To the One who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing and honor and glory and strength for ever and ever. Amen"?[59] See, in all these passages, veneration is not mentioned anywhere. Should we then, given that it is not mentioned, abstain from giving veneration to the Lamb that was slain, who is our God and Savior? Or is it not clear that all these synonyms have the same meaning? For he, who is worthy of honor, is also worthy of veneration; and he, who is worthy of strength, is also worthy of power; and he who is worthy of blessing, is also worthy of glory and of all other qualities that are sung here in one way or another. If, then, you refuse veneration to the icon of the prototype, clearly you will also withdraw the honor and the power and the glory. And it is impossible that, if one of these qualities is present, the others should not be truly (*dynamei*) present as well.

And I will put forth yet another problem for you. Scripture says, "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who has sent him."[60] What do you think? Does the honor given to the Father and to the Son exclude veneration? It would be foolish even to conceive (*ennoein*) of such a thing. Again, when the God of all says through the prophet Isaiah, "Behold I lay down in Zion a cornerstone worthy of honor,"[61] given that he does not add "and worthy of veneration," should we then deny that the Son of God is worthy of veneration? And again the scripture, "Honor your father and mother, that things may go well with you, and that you might be of many years upon the earth."[62] And again, "He who honors his father atones for his sins; and he who glorifies his mother is like one who accumulates treasures."[63] So God here does not order us to venerate the parents, but only to honor them? This would be of great foolishness. And again, the great Apostle says, "Fear God; honor the emperor."[64] Is it here commanded merely to honor him, or also to venerate him? Who out of those who have any sense at all would not understand

this? I, for my part, when I hear the words of the priest, I understand that honor belongs to the same category (*homostoichos*)[65] and is invested with the same power (*homodynamos*) as veneration; for he says, "To you belong all the honor and glory and veneration."[66] Thus, when the divine Basil says, "The honor given to the image passes over to the prototype," he is implicitly (*kata to siōpōmenon*) affirming, echoing the blessed Athanasios, that the veneration of the image passes over to the prototype.[67]

Heretic. This claim should be demonstrated with testimonies from the blessed fathers, so that it may be more convincing to those who listen.

XXIX. *Orthodox.* The blessed John, from whose lips the golden speech flows, says this: "What therefore you have done for the names (*en onomasin*), you have also done for the image of that person. Indeed, in the settings of the rings, on chalices and bottles, and on the walls of bedchambers, and everywhere, many have imprinted that holy image in order not only to hear that name everywhere, but also to see everywhere the representation of his body, and thus have some sort of double consolation for his absence."[68]

Heretic. And whose should this image be?

XXX. *Orthodox.* The image of Meletios, the bishop of the Antiocheans.[69]

Heretic. [John] called the image holy but did not say that it is worthy of veneration; in fact, not everything that is holy is also venerable; for the holy Apostle indeed says somewhere, "The first tent had statues for worship (*latreia*) and an earthly sanctuary (*agion*). For a first tent was pitched, where there were the lamps, and the table, and the presentation of the loaves; and behind a second veil, there was a second tent, called the holy of holies, having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant all covered in gold; in it there was a golden urn containing the manna, and the rod of Aaron that blossomed, and the tables of the law; above it there were the Cherubim of glory overshadowing the set of mercy (*to hilastērion*); but of such matters it is not now the time to speak in detail."[70] While these things are called holy, the Apostle does not also call them venerable.

XXXI. *Orthodox*: As the Apostle has called these things holy, he also calls them worthy of veneration by way of a synecdoche (*kata synekdochēn*).[73] However, let the discussion of these matters wait a little, as it requires a more exhaustive explanation. In the meantime, answer one question for me. What do you think about the body and the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

Heretic: That they are holy, of course; "Holy things are for the holy" is said by the celebrant.[74]

XXXII. *Orthodox*: Then do you recognize that these things are also worthy of veneration?

Heretic: Has anyone embraced the atheist position (*atheias phronēma*) so firmly that he would not acknowledge that these things are holy no less than worthy of veneration?

XXXIII. *Orthodox*: Then are you not contradicting yourself, having said earlier that what is holy is not necessarily worthy of veneration, and now you deny what you said before?

Heretic: But before I was not talking of these holy mysteries, about which everyone agrees.

XXXIV. *Orthodox*: What do you think of the gospel, which is called holy? Is it not also venerable? What about the representation of the life-giving cross, and all other sacred implements?

Heretic: They are holy and worthy of veneration. But the image of what is holy is far removed from their holiness. So even if the icon is called holy, it is by no means venerable.

XXXV. *Orthodox*: I also agree that, with respect to holiness, the latter is far removed from the former things; in fact, they are called Holy of Holies. It is also the case that whatever is holy is also worthy of veneration, even if one may happen to be inferior to another in terms of holiness and veneration; in fact, what is completely unworthy of veneration has no share at all in holiness. Show me, then, where anything could be called holy that would happen not to be worthy of veneration.

Heretic: I quoted the apostolic sayings (*rhēseis*) about the things that are said to be holy in the Law, to which you also promised to return.

XXXVI. *Orthodox*: First of all, I will say one thing, that whatever the Law says, it says it to those who are under the Law, nor should the things of old (*ta palai*) be in any way imposed on those who are under grace (*en chariti*). If this were the case, we would observe the Sabbath and be circumcised, and all sorts of contrary things would follow, but such things should only be understood as a foreshadowing (*en skiagraphia*).[75] Indeed, it is said by the Apostle that the Law has a shadow, but this shadow is not the image of the realities.[76] Second, it is necessary to show that even those things that in the Law[77] are said to be holy are also worthy of veneration. Now, if the Cherubim are glorified, and glory is related to honor, and honor is related to veneration, then, clearly, what has been glorified is holy and whatever is holy is also worthy of veneration, whether you want it or not.

Heretic: By juxtaposing things one next to the other (*akolouthia*), and by means of cunning, you have sophistically proved (*tetechnologētai*)[78] that what is holy is also worthy of veneration under the old dispensation, but you have not proved it from unimpeachable testimonies.

XXXVII. *Orthodox*: Let us, then, hear from the fathers, who are chief in leading the way (*koryphaiotatoi*):[79] in one of his orations, Gregory of Nazianzos says, "I know of Eli the priest, and slightly later Uzzah; the former had to undergo punishment because of the offense of his sons, which the latter committed against the sacrifices, taking the offerings [from the pot] before the appointed time (*pro kairou*); and this happened even if he did not approve of their impiety but actually repeatedly condemned them; the other [was punished] because having touched the ark when it was jostled by the ox, he managed to rescue it, but he was struck down nonetheless, as God was protecting the holiness of the ark."[80] And later, in the same work, he says, "No one dared to walk boldly into the Holy of Holies, which could be entered only by one person, and only once in the year. In the same way, hardly anyone dared to look or to touch the veil, or the mercy seat, or the ark, or the cherubim."[81] Second, Basil the Great says that around the ark of the holy covenant certain things happened that were unheard of before. So while, on the one hand, the ark could not be touched by the Israelites

or by all their own priests, nor was it always appropriate to lay it down, yet, on the other hand, the ark, at different times and at different places, was carried off by impious hands, and instead of being laid down in holy places, it was placed in the temples of the idols.[80]

Heretic: That the holy things incite to piety (*sebasmia*), it is true, but the fathers do not say that they are worthy of veneration.

XXXVIII. *Orthodox*: How could they be holy and inspire to piety without also having part in veneration? The divine Apostle says, indeed, in the Book of Acts, "When I passed along and I beheld the monuments of your piety (*ta sebasmata*), I also found an altar (*bōmon*) where it had been written: 'To the Unknown God,'"[81] clearly saying of those things that inspire to piety that they are also worthy of veneration. Indeed, the emperor is called Augustus (*Sebastos*).[82] Scripture says, "As Paul had appealed to remain in custody until the decision of Augustus...."[83] And a little below, "I do not find him guilty of having done anything that is worthy of death; and as he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him."[84] Do you see, then, that what inspires to piety is also worthy of veneration? No sane person would ever dare to say that the emperor can inspire to piety but is not worthy of veneration.[85] In addition, the fact that it was forbidden to either see or touch the previously mentioned holy things, with the exception of the priest, indicates that according to the scriptures such things are very eminent in honor. And if the ark of God [performed] signs and wonders, and by means of them it struck Uzzah and his foreign kin who had captured it, how could it then not be full of every honor and glory and veneration, like the Cherubim, and all other things mentioned by the Apostle in conjunction with it (*kata synapheian*)?[86] In this way, then, echoing these concerns (*exeilēphotes*) in the very same canons that were issued later, even the fathers of the Sixth Holy Ecumenical Council say the following (*tade*): "In certain pictorial reproductions of the sacred mysteries (*tōn septōn*), the Lamb is depicted as the Forerunner points at it with his finger, and this representation (*hos*) was taken as a symbol of grace, prefiguring through the Law our true Lamb, Christ our God. Having acknowledged the old types and shadows as symbols and paradigms of the truth given to the church, we honor more eminently grace and truth, receiving the latter as the fullness of the Law.[87] So, then, that the ultimate perfection (*to teleion*) may

be manifest in the eyes of all even by means of works of pictorial representation, we decree that from now on the [shape] of Christ our God the Lamb,[88] who has taken away the sin of the world, be represented (*anastēlousthai*) in icons according to his human shape instead of the old Lamb. Discerning through this the height of the humility (*tapeinōseōs*) of God the Word, we are led (*cheiragōgoumenoi*)[89] to commemorate his earthly life, as well as his passion and his salvific death, and the redemption (*apolytrōsis*)[90] of the universe that came hence-forth."[91] You can see that they called the old symbols and the shadows worthy of veneration, by using the term "acknowledging" (*kataspazomenoi*). This is related to the verb "to embrace" (*aspazomai*), which means also to venerate and to welcome. In the same way, Theodore the archbishop of Antioch, in his synodical letter, says the same things, "Against those who oppose us in a heretical manner, and say that one should not venerate the images of the saints that are made by hand, calling them idols in their folly, or rather in their impiety; these people should know that the Cherubim and the mercy seat, the ark and the rod, which the divine Moses ordered to be made, were made by hand and were the object of veneration. Yet Holy Scripture condemns those who venerate graven images (*tois glyptois*)."[92]

Heretic: Why is it, then, that Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent? It is in fact written, "And he did what is good in the eyes of the Lord, in everything following what his father David had done. He destroyed the high places (*ta hypsela*), and he crashed all the statues, and he razed the sacred groves to the ground, and [destroyed] the serpent of bronze which Moses had made; because until those days the sons of Israel had burnt incense to it."[93]

XXXIX. *Orthodox*: Because the bronze serpent was not among the holy objects listed earlier by the Apostle. Concerning the serpent, Gregory the Theologian says, "The serpent of bronze was hung [as a defense] against the biting serpents. [It should be understood] not as a type of him who suffered for us, but rather as an antitype; and this, we believe, does not happen because it is alive, but because it is dead and in its death he also puts to death (*synnekrōi*) those powers that are underneath it, as he is worthy of that. And which appropriate epitaph should he receive from us? 'Where is your sting, O death? Where is your victory, O hell?' You were wounded by the cross; you were put to

death by the giver of life; bereft of soul, dead, lacking in movement and energy, even if, raised up on high, you preserve the form of a serpent."[94] And rightly was it destroyed, when the Israelites were offering incense to it; in fact, if the prototype is not worthy of adoration (*latreuteon*), the copy should also be spurned.[95] Indeed, the God-bearing Cyril shows that all the objects in the tent were prefigurations of the worship (*latreia*) in spirit.[96]

Heretic: I concede that this citation is appropriate, but since those cited previously are recent, they cannot be accepted as testimony.

XL. *Orthodox*: If what is said by them does not follow Basil or the other inspired fathers, I do not believe them, nor does anyone who follows the right faith (*tis tōn eusebountōn*). If, however, there is agreement and equivalence, not only those who are commemorated because they spoke two hundred years ago, but also those who live at the present time, if he were to say the same thing, should be accepted by the church of God, and in virtue of the dogma of truth, should be numbered among the holy apostles themselves, and not just with the later god-bearers. To this end, listen to the *Acts* (*ta praktika*) of the holy and much-tried (*polyathlos*) Maximos, where he says, "Masters, since it seemed appropriate [to you] that it should be so, may what you have decided be accomplished; and wherever you command, I follow you. At these words, everyone arose with joy and tears, and they bowed (*metanoian*) to each other and recited a prayer. And each of them embraced (*ēspasanto*) the Holy Gospels, the honorable cross, the icon of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, and that of Our Lady the most holy Mother of God, who gave him birth, having extended their own hands in testimony of what had been said."[97] And I forego to say more because of the superabundance (*proskarres*) of my speech, despite the fact that there is a great swarm of texts, both ancient and modern, that deal with the blessed icons, if only we were so inclined to unroll them (*anelittesthai*).

Heretic: I also have a great swarm of texts from ancient and modern authorities, yet they are opposed to the erection and the veneration of icons.

XLI. *Orthodox*: If this opposition were directed to the erection and the veneration of the icon of Our Lord Jesus Christ, you could indeed

bring forth such authorities; but since you accepted the depiction (*historian*),[98] making only an exception for the veneration, why then do you move back and forth from one position to another, which is typical of liars?

Heretic: Even if it is agreed that our Lord Jesus Christ is circumscribed, [this is the case] only until the passion, not after the resurrection; in fact, the Apostle says somewhere, "Even if we knew Christ according to the flesh, now however we no longer know him in that manner."[99] And in the same way, Gregory the Theologian says, "He is perfect not only in virtue of the divinity, than which nothing is more perfect, but also in virtue of [the flesh], which was assumed and anointed by the divinity, and which has become that which anoints,[100] and, I dare to say, equal to God (*homotheon*)."[101] If the flesh that has been assumed is equal to God, how could it be circumscribed as it was mingled with the incorruptibility of the divinity?

XLII. *Orthodox*: Nonetheless, you conceded that Christ was circumscribed before the passion and is venerated in the circumscription of such an icon.

Heretic: And even if I concede that and do not raise up in opposition, where would such an argument lead?

XLIII. *Orthodox*: In fact, the authorities that you began to introduce earlier do not appear to show that Christ was circumscribed either before the passion or after the resurrection; nor do they say that, even if he was circumscribed, his icon should be placed in a high place and should not be venerated. Why do you embrace as supporters those who oppose you in half your arguments? It is high time for you to find other authorities that support your whole argument. And yet even after the resurrection, Christ is circumscribed. Listen, then, to him saying to his own disciples, when after the resurrection they thought they were seeing him as a ghost (*pneuma*): "See then my hands and my feet—it is I."[102] If, then, he said that he who was talking with them before the passion was the same as the one whom they saw after the resurrection, clearly as he was circumscribed before the resurrection, then after the resurrection he was limited by circumscription, as he had not lost the properties (*ta idiōmata*) of the human nature. Which

hands and feet did he then show them, O best of man? How then did he ask to be touched, as someone who has flesh and bones? In what way, then, was he able to take nourishment? Is there not a necessity, then, that someone having these characteristics should be circumscribed, or, if he does not have such characteristics, he should be a spirit, as he was esteemed to be by the apostles?

Heretic: But even if Christ is said to have these properties, he did not have them as we do; for that reason, he is said not to be circumscribed.

XLIV. *Orthodox*: If, then, he does not have these properties like us, he is also not believed to have become like us. If, instead, the second is true, how can the first one not be believed? Or perhaps it seems to you that in Christ those things that in him are called members are used to indicate some sort of operations (*energeiai*) and not the actual truth of material realities (*pragmatōn*)?[103] For instance, the divine Basil says, "Many anthropomorphic expressions are used, but for that reason we do not understand God to be a man." And then, "Having heard 'the hands of God,' think of the creative power of God; having heard, 'ears,' think of his acoustic power; 'eyes,' his visual power; 'wings,' his power of protection; and all other terms similarly."[104] If you think in this manner, it is necessary to come to the conclusion that you did not believe that Our Lord Jesus Christ became man. If he became man, as is indeed the case, you must also believe that he truly had flesh and bones, even after the resurrection.

Heretic: Using the strategy of condescension, the Lord showed himself to the apostles after the resurrection, having the properties of the body but not in thickness (*pachytēs*)[105] or in circumscription (*perigraphē*); in fact, even if the doors were closed, he appeared in their midst; again, he was taken from their sight.

XLV: *Orthodox*: If, then, you assert that Christ is not circumscribed because he is beyond thickness after the resurrection, you must also claim that he is not seen by the apostles. If, instead, he is seen, he is not circumscribed. Everything, indeed, that is subject to sight is also subject to circumscription; the more so, then, that which has hands and feet, flesh and bones, that which is touched and can take nourishment.

Heretic: The apostles can see the Lord as their eyes have been purified (*kekatharmenois*),[106] whereas it is not given to us to see in such manner.

XLVI. *Orthodox*: But what does Christ then say to Thomas? "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who did not see, and believe."[107] Therefore, as the apostles saw and handed down, both before and after the resurrection, so do we accept, and so do we circumscribe Christ. For it was not said by them that Christ could not be seen by us with the same eyes as those with which they saw him;[108] in fact, even before the passion, when they were starting to drown in the boat, all of a sudden Christ was seen to walk on the water; in fact, as the divine Denys says, it is not proper of the human nature that the unstable water, carrying the weight of material and earthly feet, did not give way, rather holding together against the dissolution by a supernatural power.[109] But similarly, before the passion, he revealed the things that were above nature (*ta hyper physin*). What power, then, was not at his disposal, if only he had wished? So, then, after the resurrection, even if he was beyond the reach of thickness, if he wished he could show properties as if he were in thickness,[110] and he was seen, and he was touched, and he could take food; these are properties of evident circumscription.

Heretic: How then could we understand the apostolic saying (*rhēsis*), "Even if we have known Christ in the flesh, now we no longer know him so"?[111]

XLVII. *Orthodox*: In the first place, we learn from the Apostle himself that we are members (*syssōmous*) and partakers (*symmetochous*) of Christ;[112] it is certainly not the case that we cease to be subject to circumscription because we are considered worthy of this grace. If, as you say, Christ were to be uncircumscribed after the resurrection, then we also should be uncircumscribed, because we are one body with him. In the same way as the concept of identity with God (*to homotheon*), the concept of shared corporeality [with Christ] (*to syssōmon*) must be understood in terms of a relationship (*kata synapheian*).[113] And hence, it does not follow that Christ should be uncircumscribed, or that we should be uncircumscribed in virtue of the fact that we share a body with him. In addition, listen to what Gregory the Theologian says, "'For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.'[114] Even now he

intercedes as man for our salvation, for he is still with the body which he assumed, so as to make me God by the power of his hominization (*enanthrōpēsis*); and this is the case even if he is no longer known according to the flesh—by which I mean the passions of the flesh with the exception of sin."[115] Do you not see, then, that Christ is now with the body that he assumed? And that as far as being known according to the flesh is concerned, [do you not see that] it meant the passions of the flesh, except for sin, and that this does not entail uncircumscribability, as you say? He himself says, "Circumscribable in the body, uncircumscribable in the spirit,"[116] without referring to a limited time, but referring to all eternity without any limitation. And in another place, he says the following: "How then could he be touched after the resurrection, and how will he be seen by those who have pierced him? In itself, in fact, the Godhead is invisible. But he will come with the body, as I say; but such then as he was seen by the apostles on the mountain, or as he was revealed with his divinity triumphing over the carnal element, as the latter had already been revealed as such."[117]

Heretic: What, then, if I bring forth a variety of citations from the holy fathers? And how will you be able to object to them, when they completely forbid the erection of images of Christ, or the Mother of God, or any of the saints?

XLVIII. *Orthodox*: The citations are not from saints but from interpolators and heretics; otherwise, they would agree with the truth and with the holy fathers.

Heretic: Epiphanios is one of them, who is preeminent and illustrious among the saints.

Orthodox: We know that Epiphanios is a saint and is great in the art of performing miracles; his temple after his repose was erected by Sabinos, his servant and disciple, and was decorated with the whole story of the gospel, and he would not have done this if he had not been following his own teacher. But even the divine Leontios, the interpreter of the words of Epiphanios, bishop of the church of Neapolis in the very same Cyprus—his speech about Epiphanios explains most clearly how adamant the latter was in support of the blessed images,

abstaining from saying anything negative about the blessed Epiphanios. Thus, the treatise against the icons is inauthentic and cannot at all be ascribed to the divine Epiphanios.[119] In addition, then, listen to what the great Basil has to say to this purpose, "As far as I am concerned—he said—if anyone receives a letter from men and were to glory in it, I would in no way agree to change my mind. And even if the letter were to come from heaven itself but were not in agreement with the healing (*hygiainonti*) word of faith, I would not be able to conclude that it has a share with the saints."[120] And listen to [John] Chrysostom, who says that the divine Paul does not respect the dignity of people when the truth is at stake.[121] Or rather, let us listen to Paul himself, who at a certain point says, "But let us say that, even if we or an angel were to announce to you a gospel different from the one that you received, let him be anathema."[122] And again, "If anyone will preach to you a gospel that differs from what you have received, let him be anathema." Finally, so as to show that we have received from the apostles themselves and have preserved up to the present the tradition of erecting the icon of our Lord Jesus Christ, or of the Mother of God, or of any of the saints, raise your eyes around you and look under the heavens, throughout the various sacred temples and the monuments that are in them, at all these images (*anistorēmenas*) that are also necessarily venerated in the places where they are to be found. And even if there were no doctrinal reason or no opinions from the holy fathers in support of the erection or veneration [of the icons], the ancient tradition that is in force should be sufficient in support of the truth. And who can presume to oppose such things? For this reason he would fall away both from God and from the flock of Christ, being of the same opinion of the Manicheans and the Valentinians, who foolishly assert in a heretical manner that God appeared to those on earth in appearance and phantasy.[123]

THIRD REFUTATION OF THE ICONOCLASTS

David, the composer of the psalms, is celebrated for having cast down the foreigner Goliath with the throw of a stone from his sling.[1] I am not an expert in war; yet, casting this third throw of verbal stone to complement the previous two,[2] I hope to destroy the foreign opinion (*noun*) of the iconoclasts, even if the attempt might be beyond my strength. To support my argument, I will resort to a number of syllogisms that lack the artful and cunning Aristotelian sophistry (*technologia*),[3] not to say foolishness; rather, [my syllogisms will resort to] a plain form of expression, relying on the strength of the truth. And perhaps this effort will not be fruitless to those who use it, and perhaps for those who are wise, it will be a starting point for a more informed evaluation, and for those who are not learned, it will be a sort of support in aid of a correct understanding that now labors under the attack of the iconoclast heresy. And since a clear distinction into categories (*to eukrines*)[4] is helpful to the readers, I will divide the treatise into four headings. Under each heading, I will collect all the arguments that pertain to the same goal.

1. The portrayal (*eikonographia*) of Christ in the body.
2. As Christ is circumscribed, he has an artificial image wherein he is contemplated, and in the same way the image is also in him.
3. That the veneration ascribed to Christ and to his image is one and indivisible.
4. As Christ is the prototype of his own image, he has one relation (*empherein*) to it,[5] in the same way as he has one veneration with it.

PART 1

On the portrayal of Christ in the body

1. One may define common notions (*koinai ennoiai*) as those that are equally acceptable to all; for instance, it is a common notion to assert that it is day and not night when the sun is above the earth; or to claim that something living that is endowed with reason (*logikon*), mortal, and capable of discernment and understanding is a human being (*anthrōpos*).[6] And similarly, each body that has three dimensions, is characterized by solidity, and is subject to sight and touch can be said to be circumscribed. So what do you think, O excellent among men? Do you believe that this was the kind of body taken by the Word of God when he became man? If they agree, then they must entirely concur that this body was circumscribed. But if they disagree, this is no different from claiming that it is not day, but night, when the sun is above the earth; and that when something living is endowed with reason and it is mortal and it is capable of thought and discernment, it is not a human being. It is typical of foolish men to think and speak in this way. And it is unreasonable to debate with fools. Thus we engage in conversation not with people who voluntarily choose to be deaf, but rather with those who have ears to hear.

Further:

2. Sight precedes hearing, as far as both the location of its organ and the sensory perception are concerned. Indeed, one sees something first, and then one transmits the sight to the sense of hearing. For instance, Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne of glory, surrounded and praised by the seraphim that have six wings.[7] In the same way, Ezekiel saw the chariot of God and the cherubim.[8] In the same way, as far as the disciples of the Lord were concerned, first they saw the Lord, and then they committed his message to writing. If, therefore, this is how things are, and no matter how far back you go, you will always find that the written text (*logographia*) goes back to direct inspection (*istoria*) and it rests in the latter, similarly, it is undoubtedly necessary that if the sight of Christ is removed, everything that is written of him ought to be removed, and if the visual image of Christ is outlined, then the written report must be laid down first.

Further:

3. If it pertains to the divine essence to be uncircumscribed, while it pertains to the human essence (*ousia*) to be circumscribed, and if Christ is from both, then he is known (*gnōrizomenos*) from both sets of properties (*idiōmatōn*) as they pertain to both natures (*physeōn*).[9] How, then, could it not be blasphemous to claim that he is uncircumscribed both in body and in spirit, given that through the elimination of circumscription his very humanity would also be eliminated?

Further:

4. If the properties are different, then the essences are also different (*diaphoroi*).[10] Uncircumscribability, bodilessness, and formlessness are properties of the divinity. On the contrary, however, circumscribability, tangibility, and three-dimensionality are characteristics of humanity. If therefore Christ is of both essences, he must be both uncircumscribable and circumscribable. If he is only either of the two, then he must be of only the one nature, of which he has the property—which is heretical.

Further:

5. If the circumscribability is eliminated by the uncircumscribability, as if it were not possible that both should be in Christ, then it would necessarily follow that the tangibility would also be eliminated by the intangibility, and the same would apply to all opposing properties that belong to the two natures. And if this is heretical, it would also be heretical to conclude that he is not circumscribed with respect to the incarnation.

Further:

6. If Christ cannot be circumscribed, he cannot suffer, because to be uncircumscribable is identical to being impassible. But he is able to suffer, because this is what scripture says; as such, he is uncircumscribable.

Further:

7. *[Scripture says,] "The Lord created me at the beginning of His ways, the first of His acts of old,"*[11] *[and] "Before all the hills, He generates me."*[12] *This is proof of the two natures of Christ, the circumscribable and the uncircumscribable.*

If the first verse, "The Lord created me at the beginning of His ways, the first of His acts of old," pertains to the humanity, whereas the second verse, "Before all the hills, He generates me," pertains to the divinity, then it is necessary that the one who speaks such things be

subject to circumscription inasmuch as he is created (*ōs ktiston*), but equally he is not subject to circumscription inasmuch as he is uncreated (*ōs di'aktiston*).[13] If, however, circumscribability in one nature entails circumscribability in the other nature too, as is the case with the uncreated nature with regard to the created, then it necessarily follows that the one should change from uncircumscribable to circumscribed, and the other should change from circumscribed to uncircumscribable. Each nature must then exchange with the other what is proper to itself and forego what is proper to itself and the characteristic that is not shared; thus neither remains truly what it is, because of the inane alteration—which is most absurd.

Further, but what of "deductio (apagōgē) ad absurdum"?[14]

8. If by the saying, "The Lord created me at the beginning of His ways," we understand not that the Word has permanently changed into flesh in virtue of the mingling of humanity and divinity in him, but rather that the Word has transformed itself into flesh while remaining on the pinnacle of divinity; in the same manner, when we say that he is also circumscribed, we do not believe that he is transformed into circumscription, inasmuch as he is God, but rather that he is seen to be like us inasmuch as he has become man. Yet, if in being circumscribed the uncircumscribability is transformed, it would then follow that the nature of the divinity would also be transformed through becoming flesh—which is absurd.

Further:

9. It is the same to say, "The Lord created me" and "The Lord circumscribed me." Indeed, if it is impossible to say—because it is not written that "the Lord made me" or "the Lord clothed me with a body"—that these things did not happen to him, it follows that, given that it is written that "the Lord created me," it is possible, then, for those who desire to think correctly to conclude that "the Lord circumscribed me." Indeed, creation is a characteristic (*idiōma*) of circumscription, as it is clear even to those with little understanding.

Further:

10. If Christ is uncircumscribable, as you claim, not only according to the divinity, but also according to the humanity, then it follows that his humanity is also divinity. Indeed, if two things share the characteristics, one is their nature (*physis*). But if he is of two natures, he, then, is also invested with two sets of properties; otherwise, in virtue of the removal of circumscription, the nature of humanity would also be removed.

Further:

11. If every image encompasses form, shape, appearance, and color, Christ, then, must be in all of these; according to the scripture indeed, "he took the form of a servant, and he was seen to have the shape of man,"[15] and he had a dishonorable and lowly appearance,[16] which indicates the bodily condition; as such he is portrayed in the very circumscription of his likeness.

Further:

12. Just as uncircumscribability, intangibility, and formlessness belong to the same category (*homostoicha*), so do circumscribability, tangibility, the characteristic of having a shape, and whatever other characteristics are opposed to each other. If, therefore, Christ is uncircumscribable as a man, one would have to say that he is intangible and lacking in shape; both assertions are analogous. But if this makes no sense, and neither property tolerates being separated from the other—in the same way as uncircumscribability may not be separated from intangibility and formlessness—it necessarily follows that if he is tangible he must also be circumscribable, so as not to conclude that he is also intangible in virtue of his uncircumscribability—which is impious.

Further:

13. There are all sorts of circumscription: comprehension, quantity, quality, position, space, time, form, embodiment; all of these are denied when one talks of God, as the divinity is not subject to any of them. Christ, however, having become man, is manifest within all of these. He who cannot be contained is now contained in the womb of the Virgin; he who is beyond measure is now three cubits tall; he who is beyond quality is conformed to a certain quality; he who is beyond location stands up and sits down and lies down; he who is beyond the boundaries of place is laid down in the manger; he who is before time becomes twelve years old by increasing in age; he who is without form appears in the form of man; he who is without body, having taken a body, says to his disciples, "Take and eat, this is my body."[17] As such, the same one is circumscribed and uncircumscribed, the latter according to his divinity, the former according to his humanity—even if this is against the will of the most impious iconoclasts.

Further, by means of a gospel comparison:

14. If "no one has ever seen God, but as the only-begotten Son of the Father, being himself God, has made Him know,"[18] how can he, then, say to the blind man who has recovered his sight, "You have seen him, and he who is talking to you is he"?[19] Thus, we must conclude that the same one is both visible and invisible; he is invisible according to his uncircumscribable nature, for what may not be circumscribed is indeed invisible, and he is visible according to his circumscribable humanity, for what may be circumscribed is visible. And what has been said here is true.

An objection on the part of the iconoclasts:

15. "If Christ truly assumed flesh in a miraculous manner in his own hypostasis, and yet this flesh was lacking in characteristics, as it did not indicate any individual in particular but rather man in general (*ton katholou anthrōpon*); how, then, is it possible that this flesh be found to be sensible to the touch and even be portrayed in a variety of colors? This notion is foolish, and the idea is deceitful."

A response to the objection:

If Christ truly assumed flesh in his own hypostasis in a miraculous manner (*paradoxōs*), and yet, as you say, this flesh lacked defining characteristics as it did not denote a specific individual, but rather man in general, how could he subsist (*hypestē*) in it?[20] Generalities (*ta katholou*) have their existence in particulars (*en atomois*); in this way, for instance, humanity is seen in Peter and in Paul and in all other members of the same species. If individual members did not exist, humanity in general would also not exist. Therefore, humanity cannot be in Christ if it does not subsist within an individual; and, in that case, we would have to say that Christ became incarnate in imagination (*phantasia*) and could not be touched or circumscribed by means of a variety of colors. Yet this is the notion of the Manicheans.[21]

Further:

16. Generalities are seen by intuition and by reason (*nous kai dianoia*);[22] it is with the eyes, however, that particularities are seen, as the latter come under the purview of the senses. If, then, Christ assumed our nature in general, and not in a manner that is contemplated in an individual manner (*en atomō theōroumenōn*), he can be contemplated only by the mind and only be touched by thought.[23] And yet he says to Thomas, "As you have seen me, you have believed; yet blessed are those who have not seen, and believe."[24] And he also says, "Place your finger here, and look at my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side";[25] thus he associates sensible things with [other] sensible things (*aisthēta*). So Christ can be perceived and touched, and he can be seen by bodily eyes, and therefore he is circumscribable.